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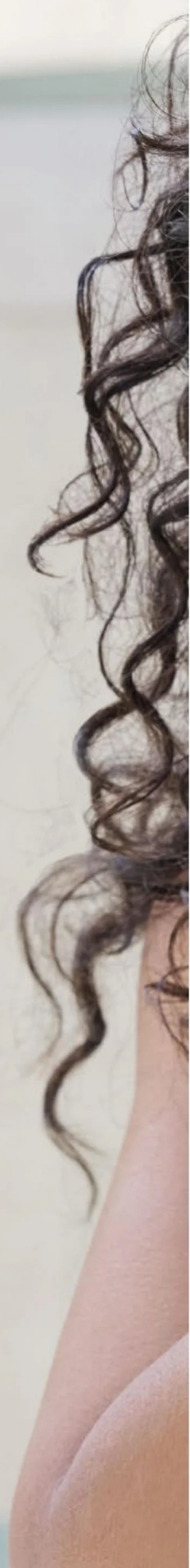
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- 6/6 — JayWhit and the Fellas:
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- 6/14 — Multicultural Fest | 1 PM
- 6/20 — Jubilation in June: Legacy Band | 8 PM
- 6/28 — The KOS Band | 8 PM

JULY

- 7/4 — The Big Show: Full Spectrum, Virginia Opera,
Richmond Concert Band, Fireworks | 5:30 PM
- 7/13 — 15th Annual Gospel Fest with The Belle | 5 PM
- 7/14 — SPARC presents Nickelodeon's
The SpongeBob Musical: Youth Edition | 6 PM
- 7/19 — Plunky & Oneness — Plunky Day in RVA | 8 PM

AUGUST

- 8/8-10 & 8/15-17 — Once on This Island (Theater) | 8 PM
- 8/23 — RVA Pro Wrestling Feat. Shagg Carpet | 8 PM
- 8/30 — Yes And! Presents Cover to Cover: Jill Scott 826+ | 8 PM

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

- 9/5 — Unheard-of Practices 5 Feat. Rattlemouth, Starr Foster Dance,
Richmond Urban Dance, Concert Ballet of Virginia | 8 PM
- 9/6 — Suggesting Rhythm | 8 PM
- 9/12 — Kia Bennett with Special Guest Cecily | 8 PM
- 10/18 — An Evening of Prince — A Tribute Feat. Anthony Cosby, Jr. | 8 PM
- 10/26 — James River Film Society presents Silent Music Revival:
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) — live musical score by Miramar | 8 PM

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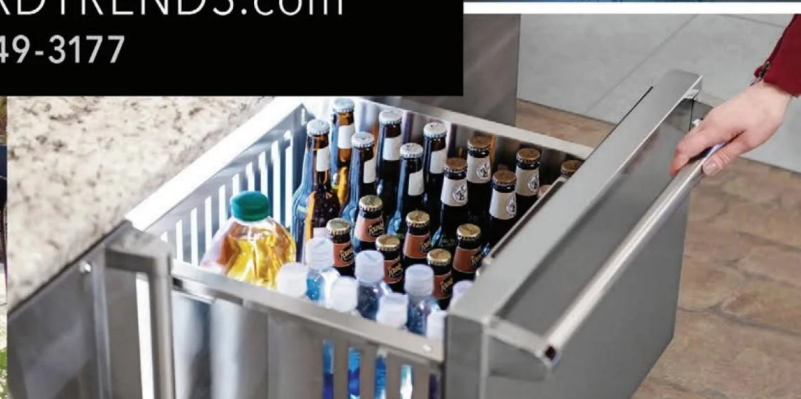
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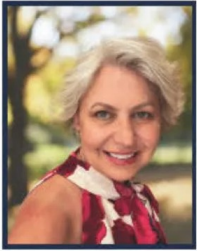
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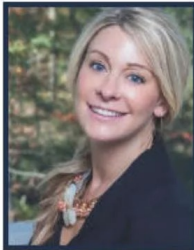
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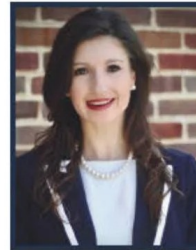
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Maya Messer
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Whitney Pace
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Lauren Renschler
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Centerpointe



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Karen Stephens
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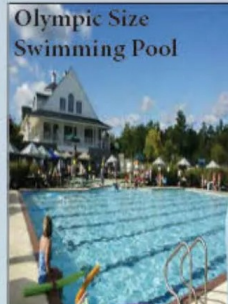
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A photograph of a bathroom vanity from the Schrock Boutique Series. The vanity features a white rectangular countertop with an integrated sink and a chrome faucet. Below the countertop are four teal-colored cabinets with silver vertical handles, supported by four dark grey legs. The wall behind the vanity is covered in a blue and green patterned wallpaper. A large round mirror with a wooden frame is mounted on the wall, flanked by two small, round, gold-colored light fixtures. On the countertop, there are folded yellow towels, a glass vase with white and purple flowers, and a small gold-colored container. A yellow starburst graphic in the bottom left corner contains the text "With over 2000 colors to choose from". The website address "www.BetterKB.com" is displayed in the bottom right corner.

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JUNE

FEATURES

81

SUMMER IN THE CITY

Your guide to fun, mostly free, very Richmond things to do all season long

By Mary Margaret Clouse, Nataly Feliciano-Soto, Mindy Kinsey, Harry Kollatz Jr., Laura Anders Lee, Kelsey Robinson, Joan Tupponce and Melody Yuan

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WORD ON THE STREET

After several years of flux, including the pandemic lull and a building boom, what is Carytown's new normal?

By Ian Stewart

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'GRACEFUL GROWTH'

As more people move to Richmond, the surrounding counties strive to manage development and change

By Claire Fortier

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REAL ESTATE GUIDE

A snapshot of market action and our sixth annual list of Referred Real Estate Agents

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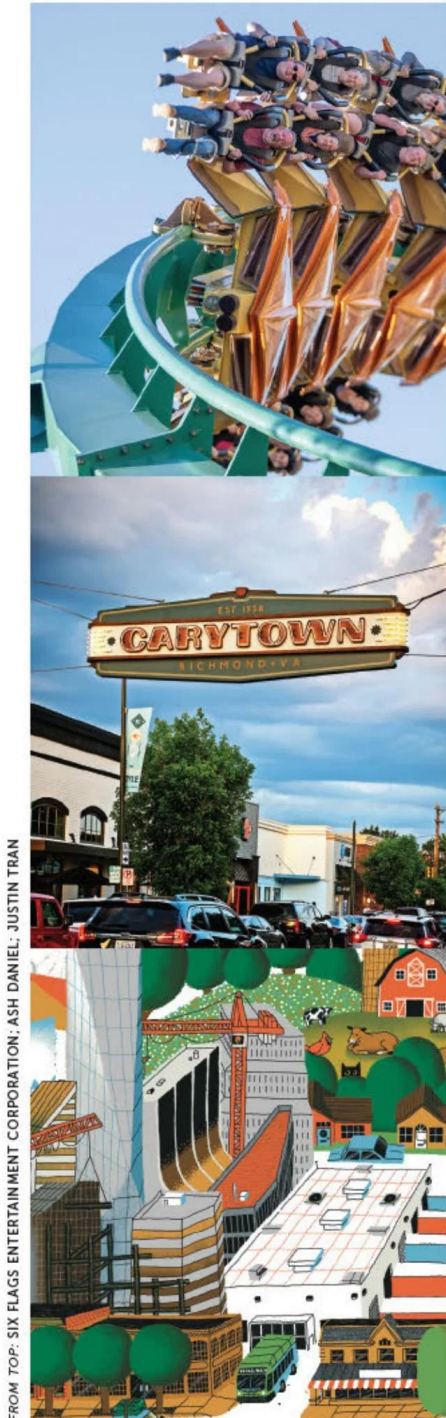
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FROM TOP: SIX FLAGS ENTERTAINMENT CORPORATION; ASH DANIEL; JUSTIN TRAN



34



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ON THE COVER



The splash zone at Taylor Farm Park
Photo by Caroline Martin

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CORRECTIONS

In "Family Secrets" (May 2025), we listed the wrong address for the restaurant; it is at 7103 Brook Road. In "Going Her Way" (May 2025), we mistakenly referred to Curtis Gutierrez as Carlos. In "Fighting the Bite" (April 2025), we referenced gravid traps; they are used to collect adult mosquitoes, not their eggs. There are about 40 species of mosquitoes in Henrico and 55 in Virginia overall. We apologize for the errors.



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NEWS EDITOR: Mark Newton

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Kelsey Robinson

SENIOR WRITER: Harry Kollatz Jr.

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Bird Cox, Claire Fortier, Rachel Kester, Laura Anders Lee, Julinda D. Lewis, Emily McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza, Peter McElhinney, Gray Pershing, Konrad Solberg, Matthew Sporn, Genevieve Steele, Ian Stewart, Chris Suarez, Joan Tupponce, Lauren Vincelli, Eric Wallace

EDITORIAL INTERNS: Mary Margaret Clouse, Nataly Feliciano-Soto, Melody Yuan

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR: Rachel Lee

ART DIRECTOR: Ryan Rich

ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR: Kyle Talley

GRAPHIC DESIGNERS:

Abbi Bennett, Phong Nguyen

SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHER: Jay Paul

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS:

Ash Daniel, Abigail Grey Johnston, Caroline Martin, Parker Michels-Boyce, Chad Williams

CONTRIBUTING ILLUSTRATORS:

Abigail Giuseppe, Justin Tran

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE:

Martha Hebert

PRODUCTION AND OPERATIONS MANAGER: Scott Bunce

SUBSCRIPTIONS ASSOCIATE: David Ballowe

VICE PRESIDENT/CONTROLLER: Elisa Malkman

EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING OFFICES:

1910 Byrd Ave., Suite 100, Richmond, VA 23230

MAILING ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 5070, Glen Allen, VA 23058

Telephone: 804-355-0111 Main Fax: 804-355-5442

Editorial and Art Fax: 804-355-8939 Email: editor@richmag.com

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A photograph of two young women in a grassy field with trees in the background. The woman on the left is wearing an orange patterned shirt and sunglasses, leaning back with her arms raised. The woman on the right is wearing a patterned tank top, a straw hat, and sunglasses, holding a smartphone up to take a selfie. A large wicker basket filled with various flowers is in the foreground.

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from the
EDITOR
MINDY KINSEY



'HOW LUCKY WE ARE'

Flipping through the just-completed pages of this issue for the final time, I find myself humming a song from "Hamilton":

"Look around, look around at how lucky we are to be alive right now." The Schuyler sisters were singing about New York City, but the line perfectly captures how I feel about Richmond right now. There's just so much good stuff going on!

"Summer in the City," the companion to last month's seasonal music extravaganza, is packed with more than 100 places to go and things to do in and around RVA (Page 81). Some are summer-specific, while others earned a place in these pages with their exceptional vacation vibes (hello, ziplining at the zoo). We tried to balance ticketed activities with plentiful ideas for free fun. And, knowing the dog days are coming, we noted a few less-obvious air-conditioned options, too.

You'll find dozens more destinations and ideas in our regular departments. I drooled my way through Eat & Drink, noting the bakeries to visit, locally made snacks to pack and summer fruit to sample. Arts & Entertainment sent me

scrambling for my calendar to schedule festivals, concerts and exhibits, while Living had me bookmarking bike trips to share with friends. You're going to need some sticky notes!

As you dive into this issue's stories, I think you'll find that we are fortunate in a completely different way, as well. You'll discover many examples, large and small, of how Richmonders take pride in their city and demonstrate their deep caring for each other. The merchants of Carytown describe ways to preserve one of the city's iconic neighborhoods. The GRTC Transit System found funds to continue free fares for bus riders. A greenhouse protects our ecosystem by avoiding invasive, albeit popular, plants. A chef is spreading the word about June-teenth with a thoughtfully composed boxed lunch. There are cancer fundraisers, a burgeoning network of support for older adults and cross-cultural outings. As part of the People's Budget project, more than 5,000 residents voted for their favorite infrastructure projects. Infrastructure, for heaven's sake! I feel lucky, indeed, to live in such a city. Enjoy the issue and enjoy the summer! 🍷

CONTRIBUTORS



Ryan Rich

Originally from St. Louis, Missouri, VCU grad and certified river rat Ryan Rich joins Richmond magazine as

its newest art director. You can usually find him crate-digging at Plan 9 or housing guacamole at Big Chile. He lives near Byrd Park with his fiancée, Julia, and dog Kiwi, both of whom love peanut butter-filled pretzels.



Konrad Solberg

A father and writer who grew up in Richmond, Konrad Solberg studied English at William & Mary, then earned his

MFA from Columbia University. He has previously written for VCU Health's Pauley Heart Center, where he covered cardiovascular research. In this issue, Solberg writes about a new elder assistance network on P. 68.



Chris Suarez

Chris Suarez is an award-winning freelance journalist whose byline has appeared in The Charlottesville Daily

Progress, VPM, Style Weekly, the Richmond Times-Dispatch and The Washington Post. He enjoys running, beer, basketball, vinyl records and gaming and lives in South Side Richmond with his wife and two dogs. Suarez provides an update on the Fall Line Trail on P. 28.



Chad Williams

Chad Williams is the founder of Creative Visual Design, a web, photography, videography and drone

agency based in Richmond. His work in tourism, travel, food and sports keeps him busy behind and in front of the lens. Williams provided the drone shots of The Lilly Pad on P. 81.



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from the
PUBLISHER
RICHARD MALKMAN



WIPEOUT

I I am a streaming junkie. In today's world of streaming television, you can just click on a pay channel and watch what you want at any given time. The other day I was surfing all the services I subscribe to, just to get my TV fix. I can't tell if I like having access to all the channels because I don't want to be left out or because I like clicking on the remote and seeing a movie magically appear.

It all begins with accessing a channel and scrolling through all the movie options. I like to watch action movies, and my wife likes to watch romance and feel-good movies. I like when things blow up and the good guy saves the day. Her good guy always gets married. Lately I have noticed that my good guys are ending up dead, which makes a show less attractive. Plus, I can't tell my friends about the show, because they, too, will have a hard time enjoying it.

Hours of searching later, when I haven't found a movie that my wife and I can agree on, we turn our attention to a streaming TV show — the ones that aren't shown on the major networks. My wife likes a limited run of perhaps 10 episodes in a season and one season to watch. I like a longer run of maybe three seasons until it's wrapped up. She doesn't like much

violence, while I crave action, even though it might mean that the hero ends up a goner. My wife likes a very bright picture, and I like one that is dark and menacing. After a few more hours of searching, we end up watching "Everybody Loves Raymond" and calling it a night.

Sometimes my wife asks her friends what they are watching, and she shares their suggestions with me. They almost always suggest a show that we have already seen but that she does not

“
**The other day
I was surfing
all the services
I subscribe to,
just to get my
TV fix.”**

remember viewing. We'll argue about whether we have watched the show for a while, then flip the channel to "Everybody Loves Raymond." I tell her to stop asking her friends for choices because they don't watch as much TV as we do, and they are always two years behind in their viewing.

Recently, we found the right movie. It was something that I have always wanted to see, and she was excited that we had found something for both of us. We turned on the streaming service only to find out that we would be charged \$20 to see it. I thought streaming meant that we already paid for it. We agreed not to pay for the movie on general principle. We changed channels and put on "Everybody Loves Raymond." That's so much simpler. ■

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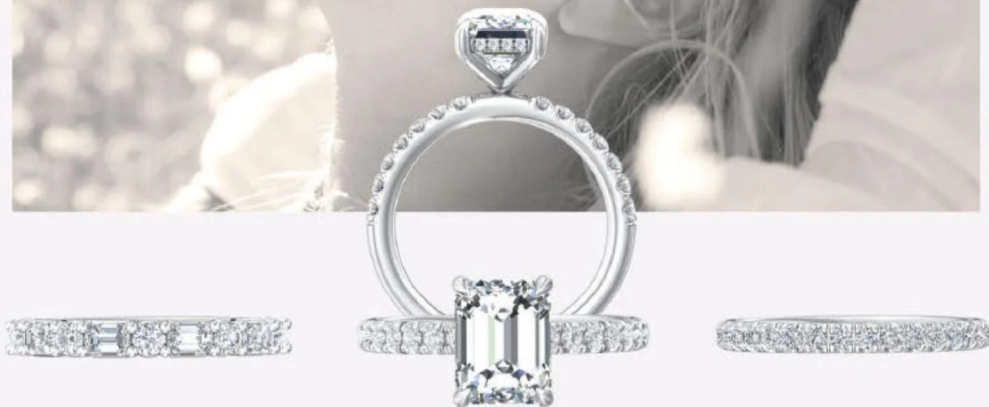
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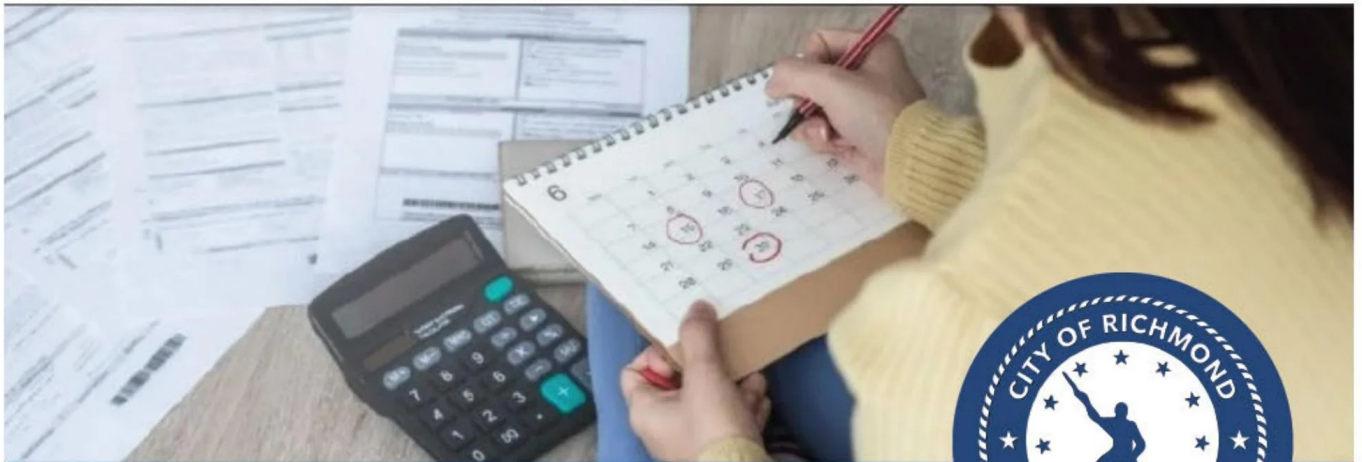


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LOCAL



Jenny Jenkins-Rash,
Sneed's Nursery
operations manager

ASH DANIEL

Fall Line Trail proceeds as
planned through city park [P. 30](#)

GRTC continues Zero Fare
and plans bus stop ads [P. 32](#)

Taming
local invasive
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A look inside the Richmond
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Flashback: When fluoride first
flowed into our water [P. 42](#)

Edited by MARK NEWTON



LOCAL

Richmond's water treatment plant failed on Jan. 6.

CATCH UP

WATER FUNDS DRY UP

THANKS TO THE ROLLBACK OF FEDERAL GRANTS AND SERVICES, Richmond has lost a previously announced \$12 million Federal Emergency Management Agency grant to improve the city's beleaguered water treatment plant.

If nothing changes, the city will pass the costs down to the 67,000 homes and businesses it serves throughout the region, causing monthly bills to go up \$8 on average.

The capital project was announced two years before the city's water crisis in January. Rhonda Johnson, spokesperson for the city's Department of Public Utilities, says the first phase of the project will begin this fall with the dredging and cleaning of a channel at the plant.

The city's current five-year capital budget allocates \$60 million for improvements to the water treatment plant. Officials say \$5 million has already been spent on immediate repairs and actions since January.

"The project will be funded through the regular [Capital Improvement Plan] budget process," Johnson says. "The grant would have helped offset any future rate increase, which is based on a holistic look at all CIP projects to include prioritizations and schedules."

Even if the repairs outlined in the grant announcement were completed, it's likely that the water outage may still have happened. Multiple after-action reports commissioned by both the city and the Virginia Department of Health said the crisis was avoidable and pinned responsibility on a lack of emergency planning, poor communication and lack of maintenance on backup power systems. —**Chris Suarez**



Money Troubles

APRIL WAS A ROUGH MONTH for Richmond's financial services staff.

On April 21, Director of Revenue Administration Jamie Atkinson resigned after 8,300 property tax rebate checks out of 60,000 issued were addressed to the wrong payee in March, and additional errors were found over the following month. The city's quick fix also caused some checks to bounce, while some erroneous checks were cashed. The city says new checks will be mailed after the first batch expires June 16 and could start arriving at the end of the month.

And on April 30, Mayor Danny Avula cut the city's purchasing card program by 79% (from 320 to 67) and limited purchases to "those where public health, safety and critical services would be disrupted if not allowed or where no other payment methods exist."

It's been a rocky start for P-cards since their implementation under Mayor Levar Stoney. In November 2024, Director of Elections and General Registrar Keith Balmer resigned after city attorneys found enough evidence of misconduct, which included P-card abuse. The allegations don't directly factor into Avula's decision-making, says Ross Catrow, director of the Office of Strategic Communications, but many of the reported purchases wouldn't be allowed under the reset.

While the Department of Procurement Services is already making changes, the city has hired NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement for more recommendations.

—**Mark Newton**

FROM TOP: JAY PAUL; ADOBE STOCK / KYLE TALLEY

VIBE CHECK



Tyler Warren, an Atlee High School quarterback-turned-Penn State tight end, was selected by the Indianapolis Colts with the 14th overall pick in the NFL Draft.



Treyveon Henderson, a running back from Hopewell High School and Ohio State, is headed to the New England Patriots after being selected 38th overall in the second round of the draft.



\$250,000

A Meta donation to the Science Museum of Virginia will be used over two years to build a greenhouse, support a sustainability festival set for April 2026 and 2027, and bolster educational opportunities for local students. The Meta Camp Scholar Program will also allow three students from Henrico's East End to attend SMV summer camps.



21%

The decline in recorded new home sales in suburban Richmond between the first quarter of 2024 (740 condos, townhouses and single-family homes) and Q1 2025 (582 such sales), according to the Home Building Association of Richmond. *For more real estate stats, see Page 98.*

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PARK PATH ROLLS ON

Fall Line Trail proceeds as planned through Bryan Park

With Richmond City Hall facing pushback against the planned segment of a regional trail coursing through Bryan Park, officials have dismissed alternate routes that that would have removed even more trees and driven project costs up by at least \$1 million.

Three weeks after a contentious community meeting, Department of Public Works Deputy Director Dirona Moore Clarke says officials are finalizing permits for the original route design in the North Side park. "The city expects the project to be advertised for a bid within the next three months," she adds in an email. "Construction is set to conclude in April 2026."

The proposed \$300 million Fall Line Trail stretches 43 miles from Ashland to Petersburg. The aim of the project is to connect pedestrians and bicyclists to parks, neighborhoods and shopping areas throughout the region. Officials anticipate its completion by 2030.

The city's fiscal year 2026 budget allocates \$11 million for its part of the trail, which begins in the north at Bryan Park. Planning officials approved plans last summer, but

some park patrons allege that they were not duly consulted.

An updated engineering report submitted to the city in March estimates that the original mile-long route in Bryan Park would cost \$2.3 million and impact only six trees. Two other proposals, which envision longer routes around the perimeter of the park, would impact more than 40 trees and cost either \$3.4 million or \$4.1 million. There was also concern that the alternate routes could disrupt the RVA BIG Market, held there on Saturdays throughout the year.

More than 200 people attended a community hearing on the preliminary plan organized by the city in April. Many supporters rolled to the meeting as part of a cross-city bike ride encouraged by Sports Backers, a local community nonprofit backing the project.

Ahead of the meeting, two opponents of the current trail plan sent a letter to the Richmond Times-Dispatch calling on city leaders to halt the project for further study. The missive alleges that they did not thoroughly consider costs and impacts to the environment and surrounding neighborhoods before a groundbreaking ceremony last August. —Chris Suarez



ENVIRONMENT

Where the Water Goes

A team effort detailing flooding in the River City could inform decision-makers

AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NONPROFIT and the University of Richmond have partnered to fix flooding across the city. "Go with the Flow," a community flood mapping project that began March 20 and concludes Sept. 1, invites locals to complete a survey each time it rains.

"There's a lot of different ways that Richmond is being affected by climate change, and one of them is more intense precipitation events," says Stephanie Spera, associate professor of geography, environment and sustainability at UR. Students in Spera's department are using the flood survey data to build a detailed map of where it floods, supported by on-the-ground information from Richmond residents.

The online survey asks participants if their area has flooding, standing water or neither and allows users to upload a photo of their surroundings. By capturing location data and images of flooding in neighborhoods across Richmond, the nonprofit organization Southside ReLeaf hopes to help the city identify where improvements in flood infrastructure are needed.

"Our systems just weren't built for what we're seeing right now," says Sheri Shannon, co-founder and director of programs at Southside ReLeaf. "So, we're hoping that this data will help city leaders ... really make the case for why we need to prioritize flood mitigation in the city, especially in areas like South Side, [which is] already dealing with extreme heat and other social inequities because of how the neighborhoods are designed."

In October, the nonprofit received a \$25,000 "capacity-building" grant from the Robins Foundation, and "Go with the Flow" is its first community science project, which Shannon says was inspired by work to identify urban heat islands in Richmond led by Science Museum of Virginia scientist Jeremy Hoffman. The findings from that study, which partially came from community members, helped to identify where trees and green infrastructure should be added. Shannon hopes "Go with the Flow" will have a similar outcome.

"You hope it's a win-win-win," Spera says, "It's a win for UR, a win for Southside ReLeaf and a win for Richmond itself."

—Mary Margaret Clouse



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TRANSPORTATION

FREE FOR ALL

GRTC's Zero Fare program continues after a last-minute scramble

By Emily McCrary-Ruiz-Esparza

Riding the bus in Richmond will be free for another year thanks to eleventh-hour funds secured by the GRTC Transit System.

Since 2020, it's been free to ride the bus in Richmond. The public transit provider stitched together money from state grants and local donors to start the program as a pandemic-era precaution to reduce contact between bus operators and riders. The program, known as Zero Fare, also alleviated commuting costs for Richmonders who needed to get to work, many of them frontline employees who depend on the bus as their primary form of transportation.

The program has used a combination of a state grant plus local matches from GRTC itself and Virginia Commonwealth University. Public transit ridership in many U.S. cities plunged during the pandemic, but GRTC saw close to 11 million riders across all public transit services in 2024, an almost 20-year high.

In recent months, however, funding for the program beyond June 2025 appeared to be in jeopardy. VCU, which has contributed more than a million dollars every year since 2023, said it would not contribute to the program in the upcoming fiscal year, which begins in July. Both local transit advocates and Richmond Democrats raised alarms in early 2024, urging local businesses and city and state governments to take action.

By mid-April, GRTC had secured the \$6.8 million needed to extend the program through July 2026. GRTC says it won't identify the source of that money



until its board officially approves the budget on May 20. Ashley Potter, communications manager for GRTC, says they see no reason the budget won't be approved.

The new budget will fund the program through July of next year, at which point GRTC will have to secure new funding or renew what it currently receives. But the company is working on a way to make Zero Fare sustainable over the long term.

The plan is to supplement state grants with proceeds from a new campaign to sell advertisements on buses and at stops, as well as GRTC's Transit Access Program, or TAP, which collects tax-deductible donations from local businesses and individual donors. "With

those two approaches, we're hoping to have this long-term vision for Zero Fare to be a part of the community," Potter says. Some buses already carry ads, but the new push for an expanded ad program is meant to provide a more predictable, long-term source of funding for Zero Fare.

Despite the threat, Potter says GRTC isn't concerned about funding Zero Fare in the future — she's confident it will happen — nor should riders worry about being asked to pay without notice. The company can't reinstate fares overnight, she says: Operators would need to be trained on collecting fares, and bus stops would need to be outfitted with fare boxes, a process that could take at least two years. ■

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ENVIRONMENT

INVASION OF THE PLANT SNATCHERS

Efforts to foil foul flora get more state help

By Rachel Kester

They might not initially seem that troublesome, but invasive plants are a major environmental problem. Deceitful with their charming blooms and foliage, they cause havoc to local ecosystems. Thankfully, there's a growing pursuit to stop them, including in the Richmond area.

The region is home to countless invasive species like tree of heaven, Japanese honeysuckle, Bradford pear trees, kudzu, autumn olives and phragmites (common reed grass) in wetlands.

"'Invasive' is not just something outside of a native range," says Carrie Wu, a biologist at University of Richmond. "A lot of things are not native, like ornamental tulips. It's a concern when a [non-native] species spreads aggressively and has impacts on the ecosystem, human health or economy."

It's why the Virginia Invasive Plant Species List was created. Overseen by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the list identifies and ranks the threat of invasive species already established in or that have the potential to spread within Virginia and must be updated every four years.

"For some, it's hard to see the connection," says Kevin Heffernan, DCR's natural heritage invasive species coordinator, regarding the impact of these plants. "It's often a very slow transformation, but what will happen over time is less and less biological diversity."

The success of any invasives is frequently the unintentional result of gardeners. Some ornamentals, like vinca minor, are commonly used as ground covers but can spread forcefully as a vine. English ivy, also a popular ground cover, is notorious in Richmond.

"Once [English ivy] escapes a planter box, it can grow aggressively," Wu says. "A lot of parks in the area have a Free-A-Tree program to try to remove English ivy from trees, which can overwhelm and choke big trees."

The spores and seeds of invasive species can discreetly travel on animal fur and human clothing or equipment, further contributing to the spread — especially in recreational areas where many people tend to congregate. This is often why places like the James River Park System and similar areas are packed with invasives.

STOP AND SHOP

Garden centers have also been a factor. A 2023 study by the University of Massachusetts Amherst found that many plant nurseries are usually a primary source of invasives. Some though, like >

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< INVASION OF THE PLANT SNATCHERS | CONT'D FROM P. 34



Sneed's Nursery near Bon Air, have taken notice and are doing their part to stop the problem.

Situated on West Huguenot Road, the garden center stopped selling invasives in 2019, becoming the only garden center in the area to do so. "We looked at [not carrying invasives] as a teaching opportunity," operations manager Jenny Jenkins-Rash says. "When customers come in asking for an invasive plant, we can talk about what that means and show them alternatives to that choice."

The Virginia Invasive Species List currently has 103 species. Overseen by the state-led Invasive Species Working Group, which was formed in 2003, it uses guidance from the Invasive Species Advisory Committee, which Wu and Heffernan are part of, to make policy.

Gov. Glenn Youngkin signed legislation in March requiring stores to label invasive species by 2027. Apart from signage, a QR code will take visitors to a DCR website explaining more about the invasive plant and native alternatives.

"Avoid those species even if it's formerly favorite ones," Heffernan says. "There are so many plants in the world, you can find a new favorite."

Invasive plants cost the commonwealth around \$1 billion a year to manage,

the working group reports. Apart from ruining landscape aesthetics, they can destroy crops, cause livestock illness and encourage plant disease. For instance, tree of heaven is a preferred host plant for the spotted lanternfly, another destructive invader that wreaks havoc on trees, soybeans and fruits.

"[Invasives] can damage native plants and make it easier for other introduced plants to be able to invade ecosystems," Wu notes.

There's also a much-debated issue that makes managing invasive species even more difficult. The noxious weed list, overseen by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, can't list species in commercial trade. This is why some invasives, like English ivy, can still be sold.

These plants are fought in several ways, such as the use of carefully applied herbicides. Upcoming RNA interference technology could also be an important tool for destroying the growth hormones of targeted invasives.

Meticulous monitoring of invasive species is key, such as with the two-horned trap, first reported a decade ago in Northern Virginia. The plant appears in large backyard and retention ponds and is one of Heffernan's latest focuses.

"Even though it's currently known in a couple hundred ponds ... often the actual biomass is very low, so there's a very good chance to stop its spread in Virginia," he says.

KEEPING IT LOCAL

There's still much work to do, but strong efforts are underway. Public education is becoming more widespread, and groups, like the JRPS Invasive Plant Task Force, are removing invasives throughout Richmond's park system. Several native plant-focused nurseries are also being established, such as Woolly Bear Natives.

The company, which opened to the public in 2024, offers a plethora of natives, including blue-eyed grass, asters and common violets grown and cared for on a half-acre lot in Lakeside.

"There are so many more cool plants and so few people growing them," says owner and grower Henry Winfile, who runs the business with his husband Alex McWhorter. "I'm constantly stunned by the number of underutilized and underappreciated Virginia native plant species and hope to make more people aware of the potential of native plants."

Woolly Bear collects local seeds with permission from private lands, public roadsides, powerline cut-throughs and garden-grown plants sourced from other area ecotype nurseries. Its plants can be found at local events or through its online shop.

While many things dazzle Winfile about native plants, perhaps one of the most fascinating has been the diversity of wildlife attracted by them.

"I've seen American woodcocks and eastern flying squirrels in our backyard. We get an insane show of hummingbirds, fireflies and pollinating insects of all sizes. Not to mention the countless native bees, some of the solitary bees which are so small you may not recognize them as bees," Winfile says. "Keep in mind, we are surrounded on all sides by roads, and many native bees nest 100 feet from where they forage, so we must be doing something right." ■

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GOVERNMENT

THE VOICE OF RICHMOND

People's Budget lets residents decide infrastructure funding via ranked choice voting

By Ian M. Stewart

The people have spoken. More than 5,000 Richmond residents and those who work or play in the city weighed in over several weeks on how the city should spend \$3 million slated for infrastructure projects. Dubbed the People's Budget, Richmond's first-ever ranked choice vote was open to those ages 14 and older at in-person events and online. The process, approved by councilmembers in 2019, was launched in September 2024 and generated nearly 2,000 ideas. Voting on a finalized list of projects ended April 15; results were released May 5.

Among the 33 selected projects are some costly infrastruc-

ture upgrades throughout all nine city districts, such as \$250,000 to build pedestrian hybrid beacons, curb bump-outs and bike lane protections in parts of the 5th District and \$100,000 to plant trees in high-heat index areas in the Jackson Ward, Carver and Scott's Addition neighborhoods.

Other, lower-cost projects include spending \$25,000 to install trash cans in parts of Jackson Ward, \$25,000 to add a water fountain in Humphrey Calder Park in the 1st District and \$20,000 to install bat houses known as rocket boxes to help control insect populations in community gardens and parks in the 7th District.

The money comes via the

city's capital improvement plan for fiscal year 2026. The funds for each district, however, were not divided evenly. "The Steering Commission broke down the \$3 million based on the social vulnerability map that was developed by RVAgreen 2050," says Leidiana Delgado, civic engagement coordinator for City Council. "This map showcases the heat index, food necessity, walkability, public mobility, environment and safety, and wellness overall of each district."

Based on those criteria, districts 1, 2 and 4 were each allocated \$200,000; districts 3, 5 and 7 had \$300,000 to work with; and districts 6, 8 and 9 got \$500,000. Funds were also dedicated to two city-wide projects.

Matthew Slaats, the interim council chief of staff (succeeded full time by RJ Warren on May 12), says seeing locals work with their government was inspiring. "We are seeing how residents can be a true partner in setting a vision for Richmond and addressing the core needs in each neighborhood," he says. "As we have long said, this project has been not about doing things 'for' or 'to' community, but truly 'with' community."

Shockoe Bottom resident Kasey Miller voted to upgrade the bus stops in the 7th District with seating and shelters. The project, which has an estimated cost of \$80,000, was her top choice and ultimately won funding. "I don't have a car. I rely on GRTC," she says. "In my experience, it does very much suck when the weather isn't exactly in your favor."

Miller adds that the whole process was well executed, citing the timeline and communication from the city. "I like it >

People's Budget
votes were accepted
in person and online.





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< THE VOICE OF RICHMOND | CONT'D FROM P. 38

because I think ranked choice voting ends [up favoring] the group," she says. "It gives folks the ability ... to be like, 'OK, I didn't get this one, but at least I got that one, right?'"

The process was "a really perfect dress rehearsal" for ranked choice voting, says Liz White, the executive director of UpVote Virginia, a nonprofit, bipartisan organization that works on democracy reform issues such as ranked choice voting and fair redistricting goals. "[It's] a good instructional tool to see how the ballot works and get in the mindset of thinking of ranking as voting," she says. "This has real dollars attached to it. People are going to see a direct outcome from their ranking, and yet it's not a traditional election."

Ranked choice voting was approved by the General Assembly in 2020 for electing city councils and county boards of supervisors, but only two localities

**“
This project has been not
about doing things ‘for’ or
‘to’ community, but truly
‘with’ community.”**

—Matthew Slaats,
interim City Council chief of staff

in the state, Arlington and Charlottesville, have used it in an election.

The concept allows voters to place their ballot options in order of most to least favored. If a candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes, they win. If no one receives a majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and its supporters' second-choice votes are counted instead. In the People's Budget, the process continued until three districtwide projects and two city-

wide projects received a majority of the votes cast.

Backers say ranked choice voting lets voters express their preferences more clearly than a single vote and ensures the winner — whether an infrastructure project or candidate — will be broadly acceptable because it must receive at least some support from the majority of voters. The system is used for elections in 24 U.S. states.

City language access coordinator Roxana Talavera-Denson says the People's Budget process was a great chance to bring the community together.

"I think a lot of communities feel that they should be able to have a decision on what affects them on a day-to-day basis," she says.

The goal is to complete all 33 projects within two years. People's Budget staff members say they will establish project trackers at rvapb.org. ■

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FLASHBACK

What's in the Water

Fluoride has fortified Richmonders' teeth for nearly 75 years

"Richmonders won't notice it, but there will be something different about the water they drink today," began a Nov. 10, 1952, Richmond Times-Dispatch article. "This is the date set for the city's water fluoridation machine to go into operation."

The "first of the Nile blue powder — [sodium silicofluoride] — began sifting into the water at the filter plant at 9:30 a.m.," recorded the Richmond News Leader.

Western Henrico County residents also received the anti-cavity chemical while Chesterfield County temporarily held off.

The decision followed years of often vehement debate concerning the nationwide introduction of fluoride into public water systems as a means of preventing tooth decay, especially among children. City health officials, the Times-Dispatch reported the next day, "were agreeably

surprised yesterday by the lack of incoming calls about the program."

Assistant health director Paul W. Bowden cited a boy who called in to ask if the "stuff" in the water would make him cleaner and reduce the need for as many baths. An older person wondered if the fluoridated water might harm his goldfish.

In a February 2025 Richmond magazine piece, writer Tharon Giddens explained how the mineral fluoride combines with outer enamel layers on teeth, which makes teeth less susceptible to decay. "Fluoride is present in most water. Many public water supplies add fluoride to ensure recommended therapeutic levels. The presence of fluoride at optimal levels reduces the occurrence of cavities by 25% in adults and children," reads the article, which also quotes Mayor Danny Avula, who says the addition of fluoride is a local decision, not a state or federal one.

Following some small experiments



BY HARRY KOLLATZ JR.

going back to the 1900s, fluoridation picked up in the 1930s, and by 1941 dental surveys concluded that towns with fluoridation appeared to possess a direct correlation to a decline in tooth decay among youngsters. Following similar tests, in 1945 Grand Rapids, Michigan, became the first city in the U.S. to fluoridate its drinking water.

The argument forwarded by 1950s advocates came down to the amount of the mineral used — because too much of anything isn't necessarily good — and that 1 part per million would not cause injury to tooth enamel or other health issues. Fluoridation was endorsed by the American Medical Association, the American Dental Association and the Richmond Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations.

However, a few years past the horrors of the Second World War and amid the anxieties about the Communist Soviet Union and China, a government program involving people's bodies raised trepidation in some members of the public.

On Jan. 29, 1952, the News Leader reported how City Council voted to move forward with fluoridation the previous night. Utilities director J. Edward Metzger explained that the initial outlay for the fluoridation equipment, "on the basis of best estimates now available," would cost \$8,000 (over \$96,000 today), and that annual operation would run about \$13,000 (now over \$157,000). "The costs have advanced materially since the city began its study," Metzger noted.

One opponent of fluoridation, Andrew Oberg, warned councilmembers that it was "dangerously close to socialism." He viewed the chemical as a political tactic. "We must submit or go thirsty," he said, calling it a Trojan horse that might ultimately lead to the introduction of vitamins or Hadacol — a patent medicine of 12% alcohol.

Dr. Edward Ellis Haddock, a new member of council and a practicing physician, made a supporting speech and >



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< WHAT'S IN THE WATER | CONT'D FROM P. 42

said he wished he could feel as sure of his ground in voting for everything that would come up in council as he did about fluoridation.

He recalled the rotten teeth that forced him to turn down many draftees during the recent war and said his daily examinations of children indicated the need for some cavity preventative.

Health director E.M. Holmes Jr. said scientific investigation and thought was preponderantly in favor of the program adopted by some 140 American cities by that point. Also speaking in favor of fluoride were Dr. Emily Gardner, pediatrician and member of the Board of Health; Dr. Henry W. Street, of the Richmond Area Community Council; Dr. William Grigg, of the Richmond Junior Chamber of Commerce; and Dr. William French, children's dentist and representative of the Richmond Dental Association.

Letters predicting dire consequences soon arrived on the editorial pages of the

city's newspapers, such as one by B.A. Fields in the Feb. 25, 1952, Times-Dispatch. Fields described fluoride as "waste products of aluminum manufacture" and that "fluorine poisoning is a cumulative, no-antidote process."

The objection went beyond the chemical to cast doubt on its promoters, while Fields quoted from a "sheaf of reprinted references" collecting observations by chemists and physicians who held unfavorable views of fluoridation.

Fields concluded: "Many, many other claims [have been made] that mass fluoridation violates both private and constitutional rights, represents socialized medicine, and moral coercion. Why experiment with danger?"

Richmond's fluoridation efforts hit a snag in September 1952 when the machine used in the process arrived damaged. In the News Leader, utilities director Metzger related how representatives of the Omega Machine Co. of Providence,

Rhode Island, assured him that repairs could be made locally. But Metzger "would take no chances ... He demanded a new and undamaged machine."

Omega complied, though repairs and transportation delayed the scheduled implementation and Metzger needed to quell rumors that fluoridation had already begun.

A decade later, the results of a combined federal-state-city study on the effects of fluoridation on 10,500 children across 23 were released. The data was compared with the results of a 1953 study. The new survey revealed a reduction in the average number of decayed, missing and filled permanent teeth. A published city report noted the differences: "It ranged from 28.9 per cent to 50 per cent for white children and 40 per cent to 62.9 per cent in Negro children."

While fluoride has flowed here ever since, the anxieties of 73 years ago cling to the culture. **■**

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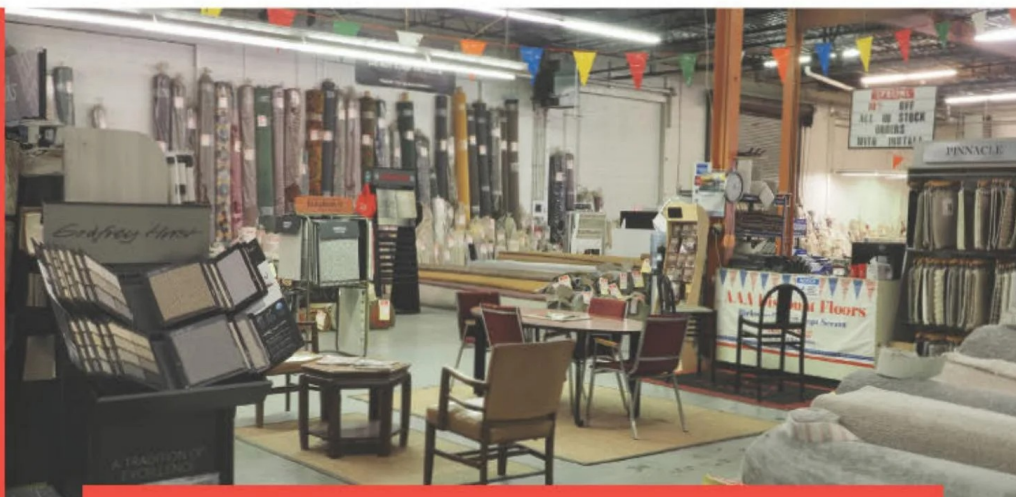
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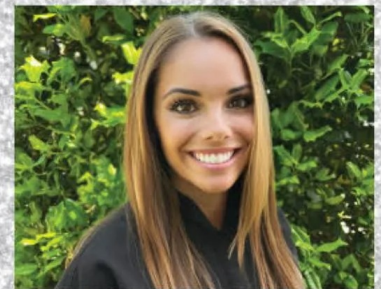
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Self-Portrait with Loose Hair, 1947. Frida Kahlo (Mexican, 1907–1954), oil on masonite.
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TERENCE SULLIVAN

"A Midsummer
Night's Dream"
in RVA
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Summer events that celebrate
Latino culture
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Illiterate Light
comes home
P. 56

"Bird in Hand" premieres at the
Tribeca Film Festival
P. 58

Edited by NICOLE COHEN

Datebook

COMEDY

FESTIVAL OF LAUGHS

The 2nd Best Comedy Fest returns to Richmond's Coalition Theater for the eighth year June 5-7 for a weekend full of laughs. The festival will include performances and workshops by talented performers from Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, Baltimore, Raleigh, Washington, D.C., and Richmond. The headliners include improv acts Miss Golightly of Los Angeles, Kornfeld and Andrews from New York City, and Chicago-based troupe Angel Bones. New York City's Chloe Radcliffe will perform stand-up, and sketch comedians Claire & Kim will bring their loose and silly act from Chicago to Richmond. Individual show tickets are \$15 and all-access festival passes are \$50. 2ndbestfest.com —*Mary Margaret Clouse*

Comedian Anne Meng performs during the 2024 2nd Best Comedy Fest



THEATER

DEEP INSIDE

Richmond Triangle Players, in collaboration with Firehouse Theatre, presents the Virginia premiere of the 2020 Pulitzer Prize-winning "A Strange Loop." With the book, music and lyrics by playwright Michael R. Jackson, the dramatic comedy runs June 20-Aug. 9 at RTP's Robert B. Moss Theatre. The show's premise is that a young, gay, Black writer named Usher (played by Marcus Antonio; pictured left), who despises his day job, is writing a musical about a young, gay, Black writer who is writing a musical about a young, gay, Black writer. Hilarity and tears ensue. The production is directed by the versatile Katrinah Carol Lewis, and Ben Miller is the music director with choreography by Deandra Clarke. Tickets are \$55 (\$25 for the preview performances, June 20-26). rtriangle.org —*Harry Kollatz Jr.*



MUSIC

BEER AND BLUE JEANS

A Grammy and Academy of Country Music award winner, Jake Owen brings his Driftwood Ramble Tour to Richmond as part of the Atlantic Union Bank After Hours series in Doswell on June 27. Known for songs such as "Barefoot Blue Jean Night," "Anywhere with You" and "The One That Got Away," Owen has released nine albums and has 10 No. 1 singles. He's joined by multi-platinum artist Uncle Kracker, who released his first album in more than a decade, "Coffee & Beer," in 2024. Since his 2001 breakout hit, "Follow Me," the rock, country and hip-hop performer's chart-toppers include "Drift Away," "Smile" and a duet with Kenny Chesney, "When the Sun Goes Down." The concert begins at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$73. afterhoursconcertseries.com —*Nicole Cohen*





THEATER

MIDSUMMER MAGIC

"And yet, to say the truth, reason and love keep little company together nowadays." This line from William Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" continues to ring true today. Audiences can experience the renowned work when Richmond Shakespeare presents the play at the 16th-century Tudor manor Agecroft Hall & Gardens, June 19-July 20. The Shakespearean comedy mixes mystical hijinks with the unpredictability of human emotion. It follows four young lovers who flee the court of Athens to escape potentially unhappy marriages. They happen upon a magical forest, and characters and audience alike are soon enthralled by the spells and pranks of the fairies that reside there. Tickets are \$47. richmondshakespeare.org —*Gray Pershing*



FROM TOP: DAVE PARRISH; COURTESY ELEGBA FOLKLORE SOCIETY

EVENT

THOUGHTFUL REFLECTION

Juneteenth recognizes the arrival of federal troops in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, two years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, to ensure that all enslaved people were freed. It became a federal holiday in 2021. Elegba Folklore Society's Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration returns to the Manchester Docks, June 14. The programming kicks off at 1 p.m. with music, dance, discussion, food, shopping and children's activities; the day concludes with the "Along the Trail of Enslaved Africans" walk from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. Elegba President and Artistic Director Janine Bell says, "Attendees can expect a joyful and thoughtful gathering to be with one another and to say thank you for the strong shoulders upon which we stand." For more information and tickets, visit efsinc.org —*Julinda D. Lewis*



SPECIAL EVENTS

INDEPENDENCE, YAY!

Every year, Richmonders gather to celebrate their independence with food, fun and fireworks. From a rousing reenactment of Patrick Henry's famous speech to a laser light show, there's plenty to enjoy on the Fourth of July. The following sampling of events are hosted on Friday, July 4.

Chesterfield County's **Fourth of July Celebration** brings live music, children's activities, food vendors, performances and fireworks to the Chesterfield County Fairgrounds. The event runs from 5 to 10 p.m. and admission is free. chesterfield.gov

Historic St. John's Church is hosting a special **Fourth of July Reenactment** of Patrick Henry's famed "Give me liberty or give me death" speech. The church is the same location where, on March 23, 1775, Henry attempted to persuade the Second Virginia Convention to take up arms against British rule. The experience runs from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Tickets are \$12 to \$15. historicstjohnschurch.org

Henrico County Recreation & Parks presents **Red, White, and Lights 2025** at Crump Park. This annual Independence Day observance features live music, food trucks and children's activities. The Richmond Symphony headlines the event, which culminates in a laser light show to close out the evening. The celebration runs from 4 to 10 p.m. and admission is free. henrico.gov

Though Richmond's Flying Squirrels may be on the road, that isn't stopping The Diamond from hosting a **Star-Spangled Squirrels Fest** sans the traditional home baseball game. The event features live bands performing on the field, activities for kids and adults and, of course, fireworks. Special Fourth of July food specials at \$7.40 each include root beer floats, ice cream and kids' meals (consisting of a hot dog, chips and bottled water). The festival runs 6 to 9:30 p.m. General admission is \$10. Tickets that grant field access during the fireworks display, and include a commemorative hat, are \$20. squirrelsbaseball.com

—Compiled by NC



MUSIC

'SUMMER BREEZE'

Travel back to the '70s and '80s for Maymont's Summer Kickoff Concert on June 6. Tom Petty tribute group, Full Moon Fever, opens the event playing hits from Petty's solo career and from his time performing with rock group The Heartbreakers. Richmond's yacht rockers, Three Sheets to the Wind, bring AM Gold classics to the stage with their high-energy performance. Attendees can set up portable chairs and picnic blankets on Maymont's Carriage House Lawn to enjoy the music, and food vendors will be available. The event also kicks off the Music at Maymont summer series, which will feature Shakey Graves July 13, Drive-By Truckers Aug. 1 and Carbon Leaf Aug. 2 (musicatmaymont.com). The concert runs from 5 to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$10 to \$20. maymont.org —NC



ART

CULTURAL IMMERSION

"Ayida," presented at the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University, explores the physical and spiritual cultures of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Caribbean diaspora. Opening June 27 and continuing through March 8, 2026, the group art exhibition is in part inspired by the work of poet Assotto Saint (1957-1994) and his complex relationship with Haitian Vodou. Artists Lizania Cruz, Oletha DeVane, Thomas Allen Harris, mujero and Didier William showcase photography, installations, sculptures, paintings and printmaking. Their creations address themes of belonging, history, memory, and the resonances between different religions and cultures. The exhibition is coordinated by ICA Assistant Curator Egbert Vongmalaitong and guest curator Serubiri Moses. icavcu.org —HK

Happenings



MUSIC

6/5
Indie folk artist Eli Lev performs at 8 p.m. at Garden Grove Brewing and Urban Winery. For more information and tickets, visit gardengrovebrewing.com.

6/10
Alt-rock band Wallows stops at Brown's Island as part of their Model & More Tour. 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$49.50. thebroadberry.com

6/13
Following the release of her album, "Am I Okay?," country singer-songwriter Megan Moroney performs at Virginia Credit Union Live at Richmond Raceway. 8 p.m. Tickets start at \$290. vaculive.com

6/14
Known for his popular song "Mr. Clean," Yung Gravy drops his beats at the Servpro Pavilion as part of the Atlantic Union Bank After Hours concert series in Doswell. 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$39. afterhoursconcertseries.com

6/28
The Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen hosts the FreeHorse Arts Songwriters Series Celebrating the Music of Bill Withers. Kori Withers, the daughter of the late soul singer, will perform her father's songs with special guests including Richmond's Weekend Plans, City Dance and the First African Baptist Church Choir. Two shows are at 3 and 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$45. artsglenallen.com

STAGE

6/3-8
The Tony Award-winning "Some Like It Hot" closes out the 2024-25 Broadway in Richmond season at the Altria Theater. Tickets start at \$53. altriatheater.com

6/6-22
The Chamberlayne Actors Theatre presents "Honky Tonk Hissy Fit" at Hanover Tavern.

The production features the return of the Doublewide, Texas, gang for a hilarious finale to the trilogy of performances, but it's also a stand-alone play that blends comedy with heart. Tickets are \$34. hanovertavern.org

6/20-8/3
"Waitress" follows the story of a baker escaping her small town and features a standout musical score written by Grammy Award winner Sara Bareilles. The Virginia Repertory Theatre production is presented at the November Theatre. Tickets start at \$62. va-rep.org



GALLERIES

THROUGH 6/20
Isabella Innis' "Grass Moon," a collection of new paintings evoking the feeling of spring emerging, is on display at Reynolds Gallery's Libbie Avenue location. reynoldsgallery.org

6/27-7/19
Crimebabies is an art collective of eight Richmond artists creating works that explore new technology and its interaction with timeless art mediums. The group exhibition is presented at Art Works' Jane Sandelin Gallery. Meet the artists during a free opening reception, June 27 from 6 to 8 p.m. artworksrvva.com

THROUGH 6/30
Crossroads Art Center's Artists in Residence exhibit their collection of landscape paintings inspired by the UK at the Swift Creek Mill Theatre in South Chesterfield. crossroadsartcenter.com

THROUGH 7/19
"Glamour is Resistance" at Artspace uplifts the voices of queer artists who challenge social norms and reconceive beauty through their art. artspacegallery.org

EXHIBITIONS

6/14-7/4/2027
"Un/Bound: Free Black Virginians, 1619-1865" opens at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture. Objects and first-person accounts paint a picture of what life was like for Black individuals who were legally recognized as free, but not equal. Included with museum admission (\$8 to \$12). virginiahistory.org

THROUGH 8/24
"Towers of Tomorrow with Lego Bricks" explores STEM, architecture and design concepts at the Science Museum of Virginia. Included with museum admission (\$11 to \$18.50). smv.org

THROUGH 1/25/2026
"FANCY: Costumes, Characters and the Richmond Masque," explores the ways in which Richmonders through the years played dress-up. Nearly 40 mannequins display various creative ensembles divided into sections including Stage Performance, Festivals & Community, Fancy Dress Parties, and Politic. Included with museum admission (\$12, free entry every Thursday). thevalentine.org

EVENTS

6/12
Virginia Down Syndrome Association's third annual Dancing with the Local Stars Gala features cocktails, fine dining and energetic dancing from five pairs. The event is hosted at the Altria Theater from 5:30 to 10 p.m. Tickets start at \$110. virginiadsa.org

6/13
The Edgar Allan Poe Museum

partners with the Richmond Animal League, the Richmond SPCA, Richardsons Rescue and Hanover Community Cats for its second annual Black Cat Adoption Event at the museum's Enchanted Garden. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Admission is free with an online RSVP. poemuseum.org

6/14
The seasonal, monthly East End Street Fair continues at Occasions Too, 6015 Nine Mile Road, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The fair includes vendors, food trucks, live music and additional efforts to revitalize the heart of the community. Free. occasionseventhall.com

6/14
Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden hosts the Richmond Area Daylily Society's Show and Sale at the Kelley Education Center's auditorium. The sale runs from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the show is 1 to 4:30 p.m. Admission to the event is free (tickets are required for entry into the gardens). lewisginter.org



6/14
Richmond's Pride Bar Crawl celebrates the LGBTQ+ community. Hosted in Shockoe Bottom, participating venues include Frozay, Stadium Sports Bar and more. A portion of ticket proceeds benefit The Trevor Project. The event kicks off at 3 p.m. at Liquid 2.0 and continues through 11 p.m. Tickets start at \$20. barcrawllive.com

7/6
The monthly Black Arts Market continues at Diversity Richmond with art, music, vegan food and wellness activities from more than 25 Black-owned businesses. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is pay-what-you-can. diversityrichmond.org

—Compiled by Gray Pershing



SPOTLIGHT

SUMMER FIESTA

Events that celebrate Latino culture and heritage are heating up

By Nati Feliciano-Soto

Summer in Richmond presents numerous opportunities to attend Latin events, which offer a blending of culture and camaraderie. From the beat of salsa drums to the scent of fresh empanadas, these celebrations enrich the region with festive fervor.

Michel Zajur, CEO of the Virginia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, says events such as the Qué Pasa Festival, which the chamber organizes and hosts annually in May, are an opportunity “for the Latino community to showcase their culture with the community at large.”

Organized by the Latino community empowerment nonprofit Rising Up Now and led by local activist Michael Nazario, the free Puerto Rican Day Festival celebrates Hispanic heritage through music, food and art. It’s held June 14 at the Chesterfield County Fairgrounds and features a paint party, an artisan marketplace and a photo booth. The Latino Hittaz Auto Club car show, hosted at the festival, requires a \$30 ticket for entry.

“The goal of the Puerto Rican Day Festival is not just to celebrate the vibrant rhythms and traditions of Puerto Rico, but to bring all Latinos together,” says Maria Arroyo, founder of Rising Up Now and co-organizer of the festival. “We want people to feel proud and to connect through art, culture and education.”

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that as of 2023, 10.3%, or about 23,500 residents, of Richmond identified as Hispanic or Latino. About 7% of Henrico County, or about 23,000 people, identified as Hispanic or Latino. The highest concentration in the Richmond Metro area is in Chesterfield County, where 12.2%, or about 46,800 residents, report they are of Latin or Hispanic descent.

With the current political climate and underlying fears of feeling unsafe or unwelcome in public spaces, Arroyo and Nazario say having events, such as the Puerto Rican Day Festival, becomes integral to cultivating understanding between neighbors. They note that

despite the uncertainty felt within the Latino community, these empowering cultural gatherings are a positive outlet.

The Latino Farmers Market, hosted Saturdays seasonally at Rockwood Park in North Chesterfield, is a gathering of local purveyors offering Latino music, cultural performances and entrepreneurship. Founded by America DeLoach — also the founder of salsa and dip company Salsas Don Sebastian — the market was established as a platform for Latino entrepreneurs to spread the word about their businesses and sell their products. Reflecting on her own experiences as one of the few Latina vendors at local farmers markets, DeLoach says, “I knew we needed this.”

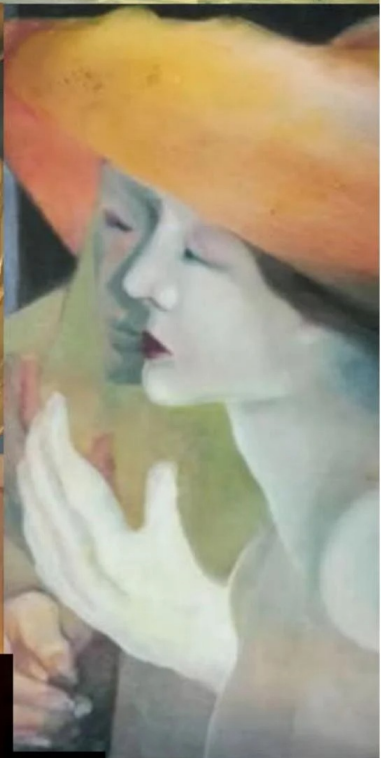
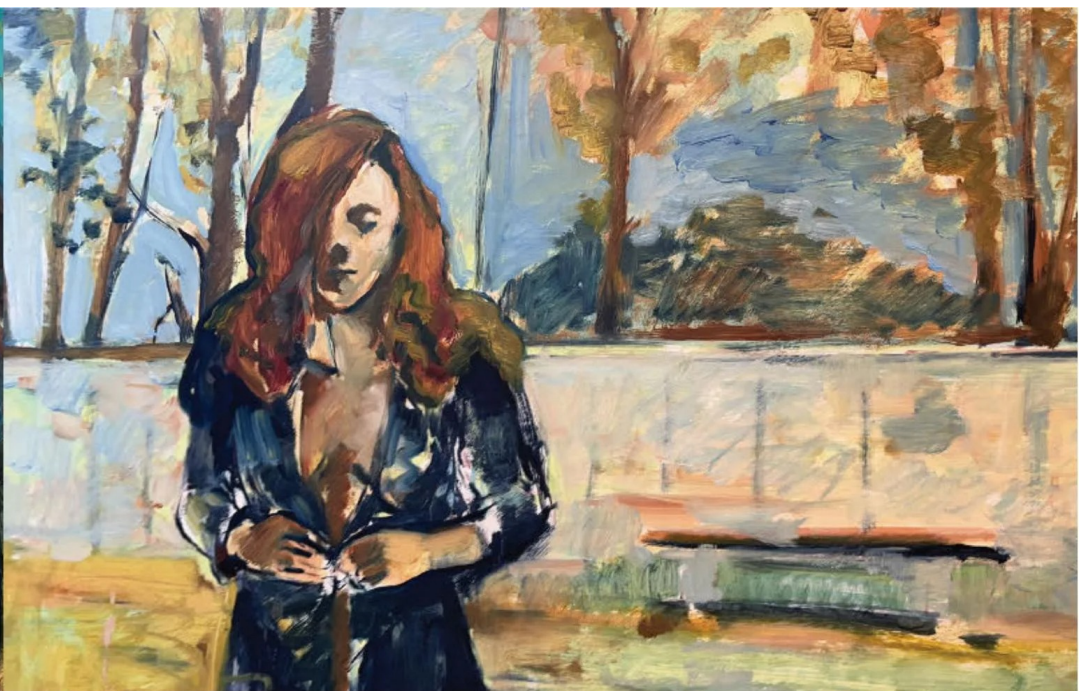
Held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. during the summer months, the market offers fresh produce, meats, baked goods and handmade crafts. Beyond vending wares, the market was envisioned as a space for the Latino community to come together and thrive.

Another gathering cultivating camaraderie is the Latin Jazz and Salsa Festival. What started as a small parking lot concert nearly 20 years ago has grown into a full-scale fiesta. Hosted by radio personality Luis Hidalgo and media production company Oasis Broadcasting Network, the free celebration returns to the 17th Street Market on Aug. 30. Hidalgo says of the festival, “It’s not just music, it’s about unity, togetherness and reaching the people who need us most.”

Summer in Richmond is an open invitation to all to experience Latin heritage and celebration. “We needed more representation in our community,”

DeLoach says. Whether attendees are dancing at the Puerto Rican Day Festival, enjoying the camaraderie of the Latin Jazz Festival or browsing for handmade goods at the Latino Farmers Market, these events are reminders of the stories, flavors and traditions that shape the Richmond region. ■

The Latino Farmers Market, hosted Saturdays at Rockwood Park in North Chesterfield, features cultural performances and live music in addition to products from local purveyors.

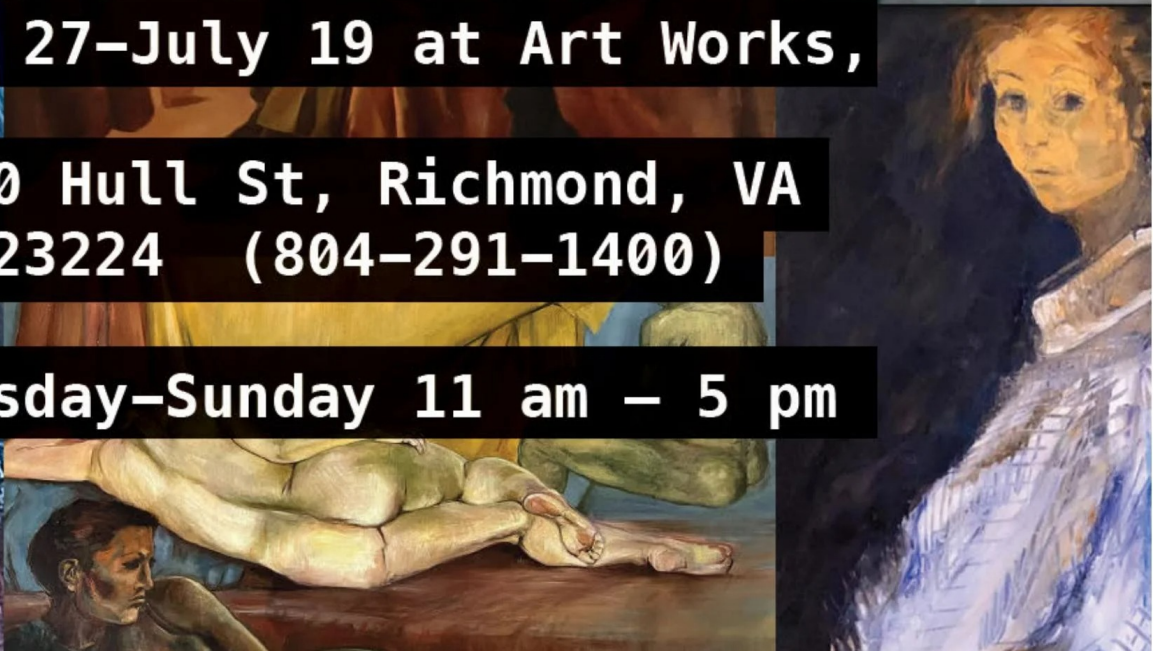


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PROFILE

THROUGH THE ARCHES

Alt-rock duo Illiterate Light brings real-time creation to the stage

By Peter McElhinney

The magic trick of Jake Cochran and Jeff Gorman of Virginia-based duo Illiterate Light is to deliver driving, multilayered alt-rock soundscapes with a minimal lineup and without looping or other technical assistance. They create the illusion of a much larger band, with guitar and percussion-driven songs accompanied by a seamless trade-off of bass and synthesizer lines. For the past decade, Illiterate Light have toured and developed a dedicated fan base. Their June 14 show at The National, supporting their new album, "Arches," will be a homecoming.

There has also been a homecoming

of sorts for Cochran, who recently moved with his wife from Nashville to Richmond's South Side. Soon after relocating, Cochran's wife gave birth to their son. "I feel very tied to this city, but I never lived here before," Cochran says. "My grandparents lived in Bon Air, and both of my parents grew up here." Despite Nashville, Tennessee, being a hub for music, the distance from Gorman, who has always lived in Harrisonburg, was a problem. "There is a spirit to this band that needed to be closer, living lives together. Not just going on tour and then separating," Cochran says.

The partnership started when they

met at another friend's one-off gig as students at James Madison University. They played in a college band that fell apart after graduation. Others moved on. "We faced the reality that if we want to do this thing the way we needed, it was going to just be the two of us," Cochran says. "That is a vision we carry to this day."

Their close relationship is central to the nonstop trust fall of their music. Their commitment to real-time creation requires Gorman to have, in addition to multiple guitar pedals, a synthesizer keyboard at his feet. Cochran utilizes sample pads that are programmed with bass and keyboard parts, which he plays like a xylophone.

The songs are collaborative, too. "We are both songwriters, but for Illiterate Light, a vast majority are Jeff's," Cochran says. "We start independently with chords, lyrics and melodies. [When the song is] somewhere between 50% and 70% complete, we come together, and it morphs into its final stage. It is a collaboration, but the person who started the song gets the final say. It allows us to maintain artistic control where it matters."

The duo's strong friendship has survived weeklong bicycle trips, running an organic farm, and up to 150 high-energy shows a year at small to midsize venues. It's both a joy and an uphill battle. "Some

cities we've been to 15 times, and the turnouts aren't as big as we expect," Cochran says.

"Then, places like Chicago and Denver have fans who travel long distances to see us. But there is nothing like playing in Virginia."

Cochran describes the upcoming Richmond show, where he expects to know almost half the crowd, as "the most rock star moment of my life." He says they sold out the 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C. in January, but The National will be the largest venue they have ever headlined. It is a lot of space for a duo to fill — but they bring a big sound. **R**

Illiterate Light performs at The National at 8 p.m. June 14. Tickets are \$25.



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SPOTLIGHT

RED CARPET READY

A local filmmaker's movie is set to premiere during the Tribeca Film Festival

By Laura Anders Lee



The latest work by Richmond filmmaker Melody C. Roscher has been accepted into this year's Tribeca Film Festival. "Bird in Hand" is her first feature-length picture as both writer and director.

Roscher is not new to the movie festival circuit. She's toured many times as a producer; in 2021, the short feature "White Wedding" she wrote and directed premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, where it was nominated for Best Short Film. Its plotline about a biracial bride who confronts her estranged father was the jumping-off point for "Bird in Hand," a full-length companion piece that plays on some of the same themes and characters.

"['Bird in Hand'] took years to put together," Roscher says. "I was working on the script, casting, raising the financing, scouting locations — you have to

wear every single hat in every capacity when trying to make an independent film. You really are the engine inside of the ship. Producing is hard, but with directing, everything lives and dies whether or not you're showing up emotionally and physically."

The film stars Alisha Wainwright, known for the Netflix series "Raising Dion," alongside Academy Award-nominated actor Christine Lahti. In the intimate dramedy, Bird, the bride-to-be, visits home, looking for the perfect wedding venue, but ends up in search of something much more meaningful. Just like the old proverb referenced in the title, "it's a movie very much about people trying to choose between an easy decision and a hard time," Roscher says.

The movie was shot during July 2024 in several areas around Richmond, including Hopewell, Bon Air and Historic Tuckahoe, with dozens of local crew members and extras. "I've worked in this industry for 20 years, and the caliber and craftsmanship that is here is parallel to working in other major film industry cities like [Los Angeles], New York or Atlanta," Roscher says.

After graduating from James River High School, Roscher went to film school at New York University. She lived and worked on various cinematic projects in New York and all over the world before returning home to Richmond due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

She says being accepted into the Tribeca Film Festival is especially sweet. "I think I had to read [the announcement] again to make sure I wasn't making it up," she says with a laugh. "I was absolutely elated. I spent half my life in New York and half my life here, so premiering in Tribeca is a nice homecoming for me."

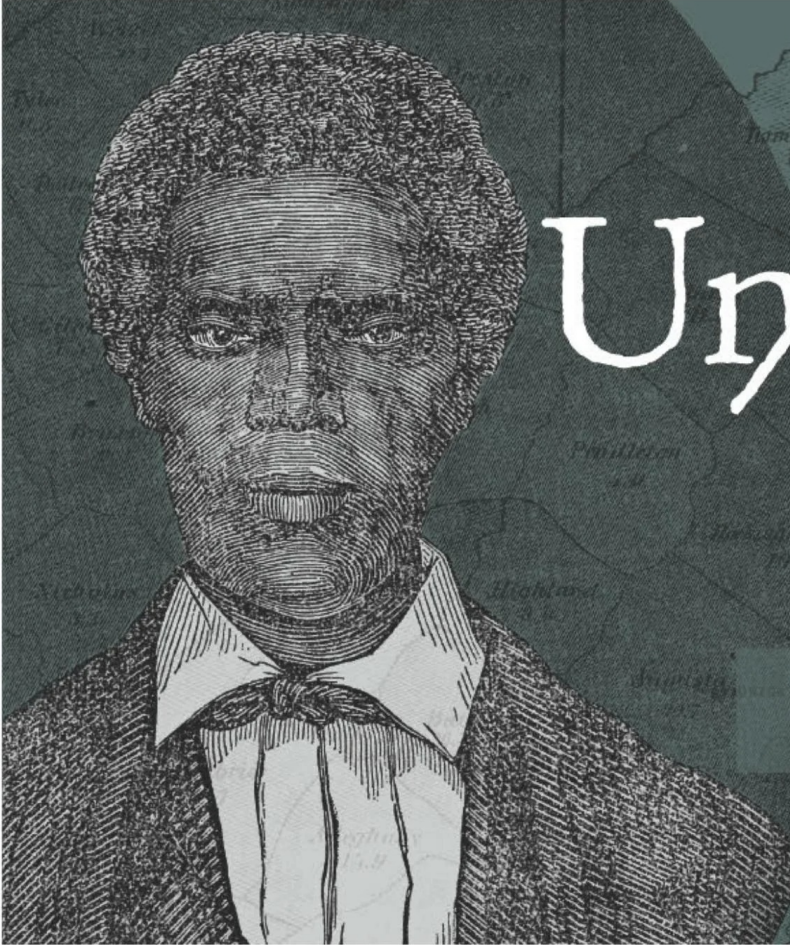
Tribeca is one of the world's most pre-eminent film festivals. Just 118 feature pictures were selected in the 2025 lineup — less than 1% of the 13,000 submissions. The annual event focuses on creative innovation and storytelling and was co-founded in 2002 by actor Robert De Niro, film producer Jane Rosenthal and real estate investor Craig Hatkoff to help revitalize lower Manhattan following 9/11.

"My family is definitely going to make a big trip out of this," Roscher says. "I hope a lot of Richmond people will come up so I can celebrate and share this with them."

Roscher's ultimate goal is to pick up a distribution deal following the festival. She also plans to host a public screening in Richmond sometime after the event. Her world premiere of "Bird in Hand" will screen June 6-11 at New York's Village East by Angelika movie theater. **R**



Filmmaker Melody C. Roscher makes her debut as both writer and director of a feature-length film with "Bird in Hand."



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Edited by KEVIN JOHNSON



SHOP TALK

MARQUEE MERCHANTS

A historical theater's revival brings retail to MacArthur Avenue

By Kevin Johnson

The Bellevue Theater opened nearly 90 years ago to give North Side residents a small, local movie house with a neighborhood feel. After decades of films and concerts and, more recently, a transition into a meeting hall for a Masonic lodge, the theater's marquee beckons again — this time, with local makers drawing the crowds.

Two Richmond-based retailers — menswear sellers Homme Essentials and collaborative boutique Maven Theory — set up shop in the renovated theater's first floor retail area after construction wrapped up in late 2024. A third business, Kickshaws Gluten-free Bakery, is the final tenant and is expected to move in this summer. The remainder of the building was converted to apartments.

"It was the only [location] that seemed right for our business, attractive to us, [had] a community we wanted to be around and we felt like there was a space for retail," says Christina Campitell, co-owner of Homme Essentials. "I felt like it chose us, in a way."

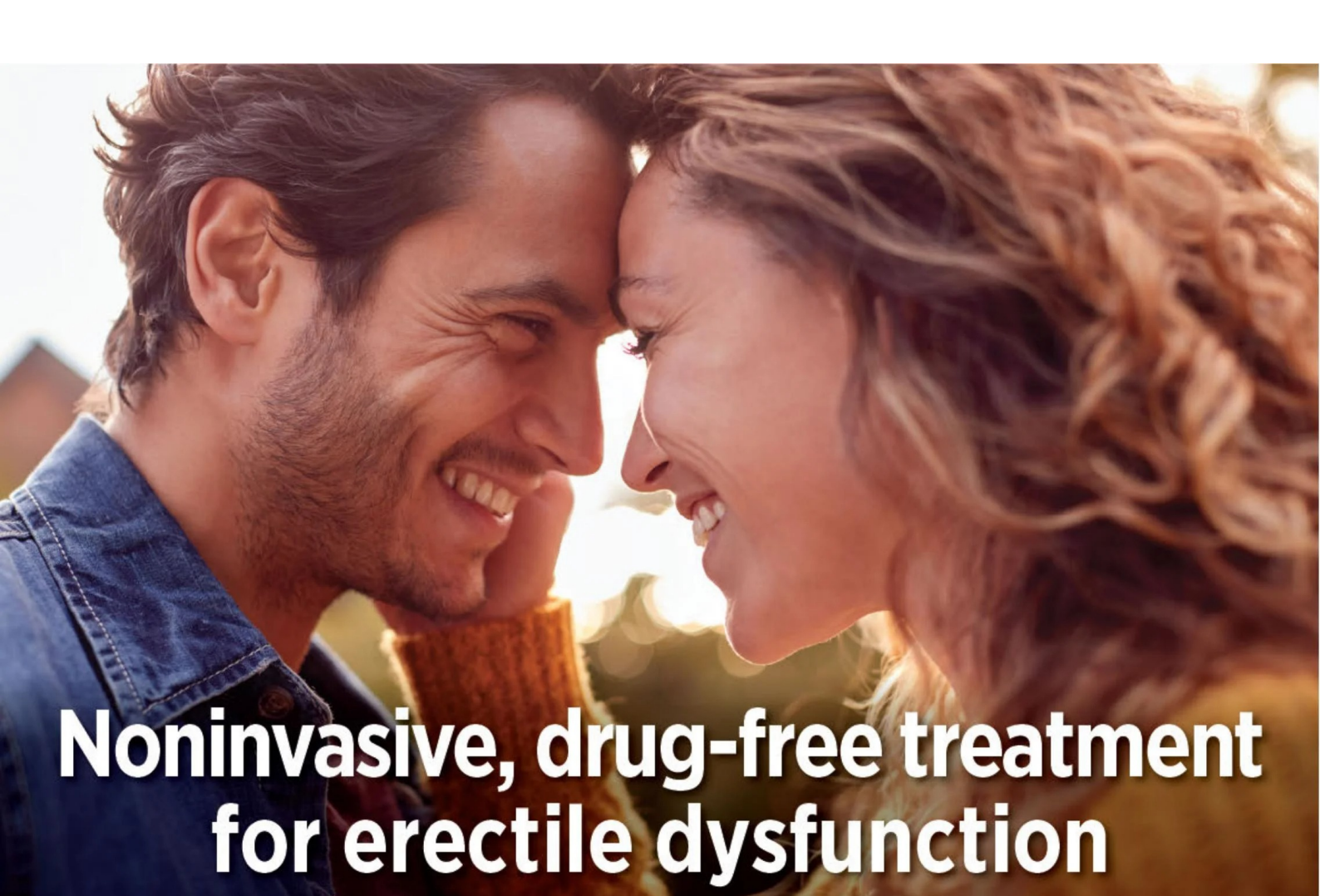
Homme Essentials' current storefront opened in early May, five years after its founding. Campitell and Alan Long, both veterans of the Richmond fashion and retail worlds, launched the brand on Lafayette Street in the West End selling clothes, home goods and more sourced from small brands. An unexpected move in late 2024 limited its retail offerings to a temporary space within the Grace Street record store Vinyl Conflict until Campitell and Long found the building on MacArthur Avenue.

As the first retail tenants, the duo

was able to mold the design of the new space, which was an unexpected, but positive, element of the move for Homme Essentials. "I taught myself how to use SketchUp to do the layout for the dressing room [and] stock room," Long says. This allowed the team to create a shopper-first design with every decision. "We try to have elevated product and nice things, but presented in a way that is not intimidating, that encourages you to touch it, feel it and try it on," Long says.

Maven Theory, open since October 2024 in the theater, enjoyed the same benefits in the blank canvas space it acquired. "To have new fixtures, but also kind of be in an older building that was historic, that was very attractive to us," says co-founder Meg Althoff.

The brand, founded by Althoff and Bethany Frazier, brought together Sun >



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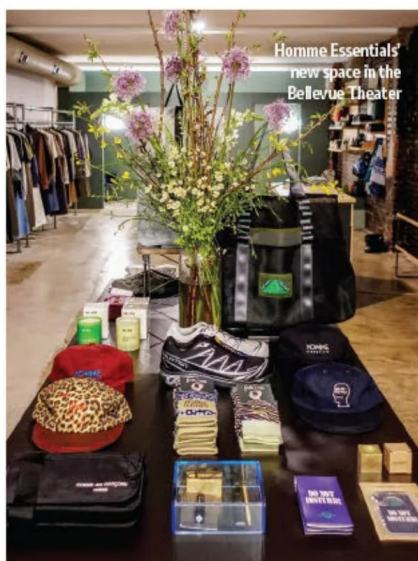
◀ MARQUEE MERCHANTS | CONT'D FROM P. 64

Theory and Maven Made, their respective candle and skin care and fragrance businesses, under one label. "In 2022, we started sharing a production space, and that's where we started talking about the concept of Maven Theory, before we even knew what it would be," Althoff says. Frazier and Althoff first collaborated on a series of perfumes and candles sharing a line of scents, then they launched the brand shortly after.

Maven Theory's Bellevue shop is now both a showroom and a workshop where new products are invented and sold in one setting; it also carries products from small businesses in Richmond and nationwide.

Both tenants see the potential of the new location to support and uplift other small crafters in Richmond — through seasonal markets, pop-ups and other events on the theater's front patio — in the same way others have helped them on their journeys to their current spaces. "I feel very lucky that we have a very supportive base, and [in Bellevue] especially, we tapped into a whole new one," Althoff says. "It's cool to see how many people here want you to do well."

"What really makes us are the customers that keep coming back, and most of them are local. Without our in-store customers in Richmond supporting us, we would be nothing," Campitell says. **11**



NA NIN MOVES IN

A well-loved Richmond retailer lands a South Side storefront

From its longtime Addison Street storefront, Na Nin has watched Richmond grow through a decade of rapid change for the city, evolving right along with it. As founder Kate Jennings and her team maneuvered changes in consumer markets — maintaining a physical location for vintage clothes, home goods, in-house designs and more while also building a major retail operation and online expanding to a production facility — the brand has always had faith in the brick-and-mortar concept.

As of this spring, Na Nin's reach has spread a little wider; specifically, across the river. The brand's new storefront opened last month at 2614 Buford Rd, a space in the Bon Air Shopping Center next to fellow institutions Perk! Coffee and Lunchbox and Joe's Inn Bon Air. "I felt like this would be the right place to introduce Na Nin to people, and have a really exciting response," Jennings says.

First founded in 2009 as an Etsy shop selling vintage finds, Na Nin has gone

from solo venture to a sizable team producing a variety of house-designed and made goods, including fragrances, candles, a clothing line and more. The brand moved into its Addison Street storefront in 2014 and gained recognition around Richmond for appearances at markets and its strong online presence.

The new location — roughly 2,000 square feet — greatly expands on the footprint of the Addison Street shop and allows the founders to host pop-ups from new Richmond-based brands while expanding their recurring events and sales.

For Jennings, the investment in a larger traditional storefront is an investment back in Richmond. "If people find us online and they want to participate in what we're offering, they can have the opportunity for the physical presence; a place to go and shop," Jennings says. "It's a nice way to keep being part of why Richmond is special." **11**

— **Kevin Johnson**

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GIVING BACK

Melting Pot

Culture Encounters connects backgrounds to promote understanding in Richmond

By Joan Tupponce

Amma Gatty had no intention of curating cultural programs for adults when she started the youth-focused nonprofit Next Star Arts Program in 2015. But in 2018, during Next Star's summer camps focused on cultural diversity, she heard that parents also had interest in the cultural offerings their kids were enjoying.

"They asked me, can you curate programs for us?" says Gatty, founder and executive director of Culture Encounters, a rebranded version of her original nonprofit that now brings lessons in understanding to all ages.

Gatty, who immigrated to the United States from Ghana, knows all about cultural divides and biases. After moving to Richmond in 2001, she was immersed in American culture through the community around her. Culture Encounters creates opportunities like those for local businesses and individuals, allowing them to see something new through arts events, talks and other programming.

Regularly communicating with people from different backgrounds, whether in a neighborhood or business, is vital, she believes. "I don't think we have a choice. We have to learn other cultures," she says. "Whether we like it or not, we are connected to the world, and that's important because of the time we live in. We can't afford not to get to know people and cultures."

Culture Encounters' mission appealed to Thomas Claiborne, vice president outreach officer for Chesapeake Bank and chair of the company's I.D.E.A.

(Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accountability) committee. Fifteen bank employees across departments went with Culture Encounters to The Mantu, the Carytown restaurant, and talked with chef and Afghanistan native Hamid Noori.

"This gave us the opportunity to step away from the biases we may have to understand that we all have something in common," Claiborne says. "Amma's business is about bridging cultural divides by having these types of interactions. It made sense to work with her."

For Claiborne and his fellow employees, Culture Encounters provided a lesson in building a connection firsthand to impact their conceptions

of other backgrounds. "We didn't know what we were walking into," Claiborne says. "The chef showed us how he made the dishes and walked us through the steps. We heard the story behind the food and his experiences as a kid, and he incorporated that into the menu. As we were learning about the food, we got to learn about him."

Businesses, like Chesapeake Bank, are becoming a common client for Culture Encounters as the nonprofit expands locally. In 2023, the nonprofit reached 423 people with its programming. Last year that number jumped to 1,500. "My goal is to keep doubling those numbers each year," she says.

Gatty recognizes she can't change the world in exactly the way that she would like, but she takes pride in spreading understanding in her community. "People need to think of the person when thinking of an immigrant. We are all human. We just want to be better," she says. "If we can accomplish that, my work is done." ■

Amma Gatty (third from right), Hamid Noor (center) and Chesapeake Bank employees participating in Culture Encounters



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HEALTH

AN ADVOCACY ANNIVERSARY

Women and Wellness, VCU Massey's cancer fundraiser, celebrates 30 years

By Kevin Johnson

Thirty years ago, research and treatment of women's cancers suffered from a nationwide lack of attention, funding and general awareness. Even as cancer research began to widen its scope in the '80s and '90s, women's health advocacy fell behind.

At the same time, here in Richmond, the decade-old VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center was growing its departments to improve treatment for women while a collection of savvy networkers and cancer survivors sought to clear the hurdles faced by women with cancer. This led to a partnership with VCU Massey to start the annual Women and Wellness fundraiser, which is now a major catalyst of community and charity in Richmond.

"We knew we had a good idea because there was this resounding response from people at Massey, and people in Richmond in general," says Julie Fritz, one of the event's founders.

The first Women and Wellness luncheon, held at The Jefferson Hotel on Valentine's Day in 1995, produced a turnout that surprised even the organizers, Fritz

says. Now in its 30th year, the ballroom looks unchanged to Fritz. "Tables full of people are still a good thing to have; it means we're doing something right."

This year's gathering was held in February. Author and breast cancer survivor Judy Pearson joined as the keynote speaker; past years have brought actress Meg Ryan and author Elizabeth Gilbert to the Jefferson to share their stories.

Dr. Mary Helen Hackney, an oncologist with VCU Health, started her role at VCU Massey shortly after the first Women and Wellness event was held. "I heard about it and saw so many women congregating for this cause," she says. "Here was this nucleus of something that was bringing 300 women together for a cause that was supporting women's health."

Hackney cites clinical research as a major key to solving the unknowns of all cancers, adding that fundraisers like Women and Wellness draw funds that support trials for new drugs, treatments and more. "When you do philanthropy, you are doing it not because you necessarily think it's going to help you, but it's because you know that there's a mission for all of us to

help each other," she says.

Over the years, the gathering has built a network of care providers, patients, survivors and loved ones in Richmond and beyond. Farrah Massenburg, a former VCU Massey patient and committee member for Women and Wellness, sees this as one of the biggest event's strengths.

"You're connecting with other previous patients, current patients, you're hearing their stories or stories of people they know," she says. "You get to know people, you look out for them and the hugs are genuine."

Beyond the luncheon, organizers at VCU Massey are looking to add new events to continue the conversation: Play it Forward, a charity tennis tournament, will take place Oct. 4-5 at Courtside West in the West End.

After three decades of community growth, longtime attendees like Fritz and Hackney agree that the network of boosters has become generational, a positive sign for the future of the event. "This means so much more to us because it's been nonstop, we see one another every year," Fritz says. "We're happy to all be here together telling these stories and building something bigger together." ■

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President Tiara Green explains that the organization's flexible program model empowers patients to use their funding where it's needed most, something few others offer. "A diagnosis does not just affect your health," she says. "So, our programs are designed to treat the whole person."

Green emphasizes the importance of deepening local relationships and making sure that the community knows help is close to home. "We're focused on strengthening the impact in our home community and making sure our neighbors know that the same organization making an impact across the country is right down the road, working every day to support individuals and families here at home."

"Healthcare is a right, not a privilege. Our goal is to ensure that every person has access to the care they need."

— Tiara Green, President, Accessia Health

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TRY THIS

Such Great Heights

Rock climbing in Richmond is on the rise

By Rachel Kester

For some, hanging on the side of a sheer wall dozens of feet above the ground is about chasing the thrill of adventure.

Others enjoy the creative exercise that comes with climbing rock walls indoors and out. And for many, it's a fun way to hang out with friends. No matter what makes climbing appealing, Richmond has plenty of opportunities to try out the sport.

The city is served by two indoor climbing gyms: the North Carolina-founded Triangle Rock Club in the Near West End and the locally owned Peak Experiences on Overbrook Road. Established in 1997, Peak Experiences has locations in Richmond and Midlothian and hosts classes on their multiple climbing walls, which have routes for bouldering (ropeless climbing), top roping (climbing with rope support) and lead climbing (climbing while carrying ropes).

"Each session has its own specific focus," says Casey Hitchcock, director of climbing center operations for Peak Experiences. Some key lessons include how to belay, which is the role of counterweighing a climber on a rope, and understanding commands on the wall.

Peak Experiences' youth programs have become more popular lately, thanks in part to interest sparked by the sport's recent inclusion in the

A climber at Peak Experiences' Richmond outpost



Olympics. These programs range from casual, educational climbing camps to competitive teams that prepare young athletes to participate in USA Climbing competitions.

"[Climbing] is a great workout and [has a] low barrier to entry," says Ashley Smith, Peak Experiences' director of youth programs. "The community here doesn't compare to other sports and other workplaces." For those looking to rise in the local climbing community, Peak Experiences hosts social gatherings like the adult bouldering league (a weekly Friday meetup) and Top Out, a climbing community for LGBTQIA+ climbers.

Adult and youth classes come with all the equipment needed — shoes, harnesses and other gear — and are taught in small groups with one instructor assisting no more than five participants at a time. Memberships at Triangle Rock Club and Peak Experiences are billed weekly, monthly or yearly, but both gyms offer day passes and trial memberships for curious climbers.

In warm weather months, climbers can take advantage of the city's

Manchester Climbing Wall. Situated at the south end of the Manchester Bridge, the space is composed of 19th-century train trestles that were converted into climbing walls in the '80s by local climbers Rob Carter and Jamie McGrath, who uncovered the forgotten structures buried under kudzu.

"[The Manchester Climbing Wall] is really unusual," says Giles Garrison, superintendent of the James River Park System. "It's not a natural surface; it's a piece of city infrastructure." No permit is necessary to get on the wall, and space is first come, first served. Bolts and anchors are in place, but climbers need to bring their own ropes and harnesses. Be sure to use proper climbing etiquette, like communicating that a rope is falling.

Each pillar features a combination of different options for everything from top rope to sport climbing, for a total of 40 routes overall. "In the last 10 years, new bolts have been put in, making it a lot more accessible to climbers of different backgrounds and skill levels," Garrison says. ■

COURTESY CASEY HITCHCOCK



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ENCORE

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

VCU's Virginia Center on Aging receives grant funding to organize a much-needed network for elder support

By Konrad Solberg

Roughly 21% of older adults in the U.S. experience some form of abuse, according to recent research. Within Virginia, the state's adult protective services verified nearly 13,000 cases of elder abuse in 2022. Older adults also face threats to housing, access to care and support services; a January 2025 count by homelessness nonprofit Homeward revealed 40% of Richmond's unhoused population are over 55 years old.

Two organizations within Virginia Commonwealth University, the Department of Gerontology and the Virginia Center on Aging, aim to improve quality of life for older adults in the region through a collaborative effort called The Greater Richmond Elder Justice Initiative.

"There are no shelters like it in the area," says Sarah Marrs, Ph.D., director of research at VCU's Virginia Center on Aging. "And there's only a handful of [elder justice] shelters in the country."

The project's core function is to provide emergency and transitional housing needs and support services

to older adults experiencing abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Funded by a first-year grant of nearly \$600,000, primarily from the federal Administration for Community Living in the Department of Health and Human Services, the initiative won't have one central location in the region. Instead, older adults will be directed to tailored services from various organizations in Richmond that provide housing, legal assistance, home-delivered meals and more. This decentralized model — relying on multiple nonprofits to provide care across the region within one system — assists in reaching elders in their coverage area, which includes the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent and Powhatan, and the city of Richmond.

Once the network is active, Marrs and her partners aim to support each person in need with a personalized and trauma-informed approach. Angie Phelon, chief program officer at The Span Center, formerly Senior Connections, says coming to each elder with a fresh perspective will help the

center learn an individual's needs and provide tailored help. Success for the center would be defined on this individual level, Phelon says.

As older adults seek care from the initiative, grant-funded staff and volunteers will determine their needs. Team members will help individuals find permanent housing, assess their eligibility for benefits such as SNAP, navigate programs such as Medicaid, and even provide transportation to and from doctor appointments.

The nation's elderly population is expected to grow, and adults aged 60 and older are currently nearly 20% of the city's population; that's just one reason Marrs stresses the value of the project's grant funding and continued investment. According to Marrs, the award has already helped form new partnerships that have permanently housed three older adults, with plans to house another in the short term. Because the grant is distributed over two years, the team is only witnessing the beginning of the grant's benefits.

"You see the need and find the right people, and you jump in and try to do something like that," Marrs says. "And it's been incredible that we've been able to get this grant and have the sort of success we're already seeing from it." ■

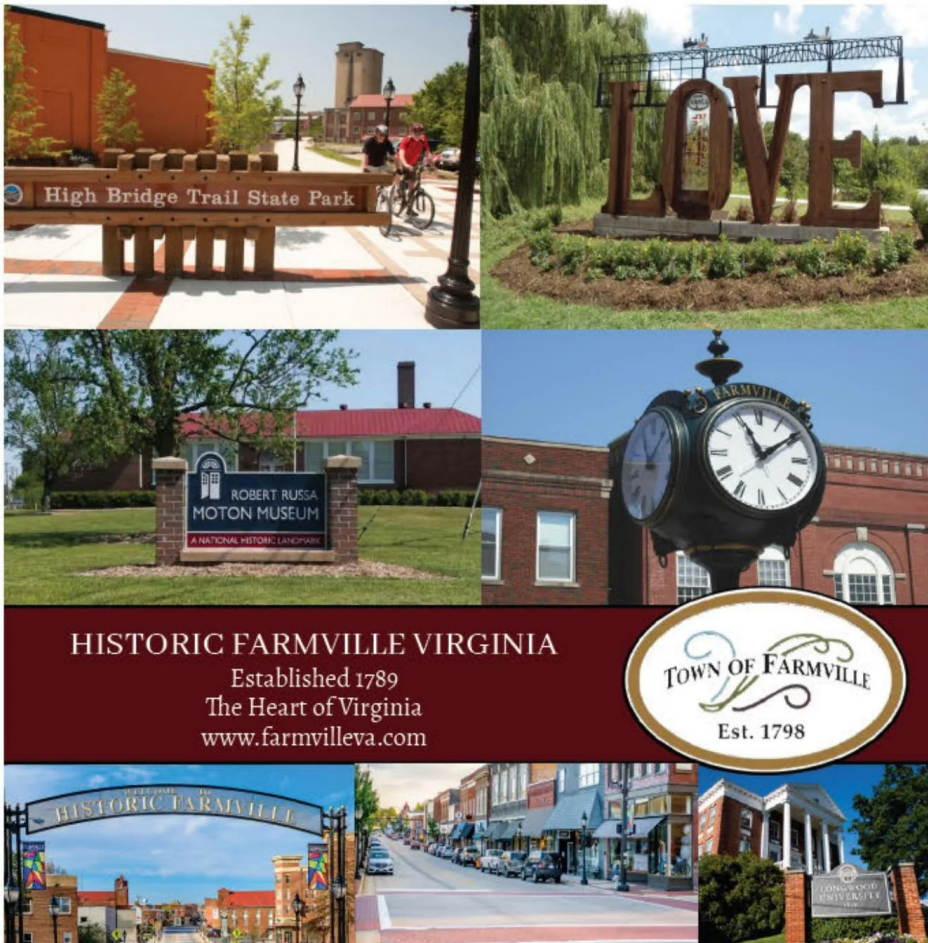


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High Bridge Trail State Park

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SOOTHING SUMMER MOMENTS

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TRAVEL

Trips on Two Wheels

Try touring the state by bicycle

By Eric J. Wallace

Virginia brims with destinations that boast incredible bike trails with easy access to great travel spots — the hardest part is deciding where to go first. Since spring's cool days are dwindling and summer's heat is about to kick in, now's the best time to plan your pedal-powered adventure.

Whether it's a breezy jaunt along the Blue Ridge Parkway, accessed via some of the top outdoor towns in the nation; a loop through a near-magical coastal nature preserve; or a ride on mountainside flow trails at a family-friendly resort, these curated bike trips can provide a new way of seeing the state.

1 ▼ FIRST LANDING STATE PARK, VIRGINIA BEACH

Starting from a 1.5-mile-long Chesapeake Bay beach, the 2,888-acre **First Landing State Park** extends south through coastal maritime forests and wetlands on Broad Bay to end at a historic northern Virginia Beach neighborhood. Better still, it's checkered with more than 20 miles of bike routes.

The 6-mile **Cape Henry Trail** is smooth, low in elevation and friendly for beginners, and it serves as a connector between the park's northern and southern entrances. Breeze through shaded forests filled with sprawling, moss-covered live oaks, and enjoy lengthy sections of wooded boardwalk that wind through swamps and towering stands of bald cypress trees.

Among the boardwalk's lodging options, the upmarket **Historic Cavalier Hotel & Beach Club** stands out. The hotel sits a 1.5 miles from the park's southern trailhead and is complete with an on-site distillery and trio of restaurants.

Cape Henry Trail, First Landing State Park



The High Bridge Trail near Farmville

2 ▲ HIGH BRIDGE TRAIL STATE PARK, FARMVILLE

The **High Bridge Trail**, a 32.3-mile mixed-use path slicing through Farmville and owned by the Virginia State Parks system, was once a railroad line following the Appomattox River through rural piedmont foothills and farmlands. While tackling the full route — beginning near Pamplin and ending at the Sandy River Reservoir — can be a chore, you can catch the major attractions by starting in downtown Farmville and riding to the park's namesake trestle bridge. The 2,400-foot-long, 125-foot-tall National Historic Landmark sits about 4 miles from town and dates to 1853. It boasts sweeping vistas of the Appomattox River, surrounding forests and the distant Blue Ridge mountains.

Stay in Farmville at the **Hotel Weyanoke**, an overhauled 70-room boutique that was originally founded in 1925. Enjoy drinks and small plates on a rooftop terrace, then proceed to **Charley's Waterfront Cafe** for solid steakhouse eats in a restored 19th-century warehouse.

3 MASSANUTTEN RESORT, MCGAHEYSVILLE

The four-season resort in western Virginia is home to one of two lift-assisted mountain bike parks in the state. **Massanutten's** slopes are now crisscrossed with more than a dozen miles of trails, recently upgraded, that range in difficulty from greenhorn to professional grade. The paths weave through forests near the lower lift area and offer nifty features like rock hops, small tabletop jumps and gently banked curves. Tougher routes descend from the mountain's 3,000-foot ridgeline and include the butter-smooth, mile-long jump trail "Creamy," which boasts massive curves and about 50 tabletops.

Spend the night at the resort in a slopeside summit condo and take in eastward views of the Page Valley and Shenandoah National Park from a jacuzzi-equipped deck. Grab drinks in the window-lined **Base Camp** bar, which overlooks the lower lift area, and follow with locally sourced surf-and-turf at nearby **Campfire Grill**. >

FROM TOP: COURTESY VIRGINIA STATE PARKS; STEVE SHIRES; COURTESY VIRGINIA STATE PARKS; TRICIA ANDERSON

4 ▼ CHESSIE TRAIL, LEXINGTON

Find the western terminus of the 7-mile **Chessie Trail** on the outskirts of downtown Lexington in the small but gorgeous **Jordan's Point Park**. The crush-and-run gravel route is mostly flat and proceeds along the almost wholly undeveloped banks of the Maury River. Fly through dense riparian forests filled with colorful migratory birds and pass by restored 19th-century wooden railroad trestles, soaring stone cliffs and stone canal locks from the early 1800s brought back to life. The route concludes in the sleepy western Virginia city of Buena Vista.

Downtown Lexington's **Gin Hotel** is the perfect basecamp for the Chessie Trail, just a mile ride from Jordan's Point Park. The 39-room boutique retains much of its 1926 art deco decor and is equipped with a chic terrace cocktail lounge and Southern-style restaurant. The nearby **Bistro on Main** dishes out solid Southern staples like shrimp and grits paired with local beer and wine in an upscale casual setting.



Chessie Trail near Lexington

5 ▼ ROANOKE RIVER GREENWAY & EXPLORE PARK, ROANOKE

In-the-know cyclists hail Roanoke as the crown jewel of Virginia's Blue Ridge region. **Carvins Cove Natural Preserve** is home to a 60-mile-long municipal trail system that helped the city win designation as one of just 15 International Mountain Bicycling Association silver-level ride centers. For those who prefer their rides farther afield, the city's 30-plus-mile greenway network is the way to go.

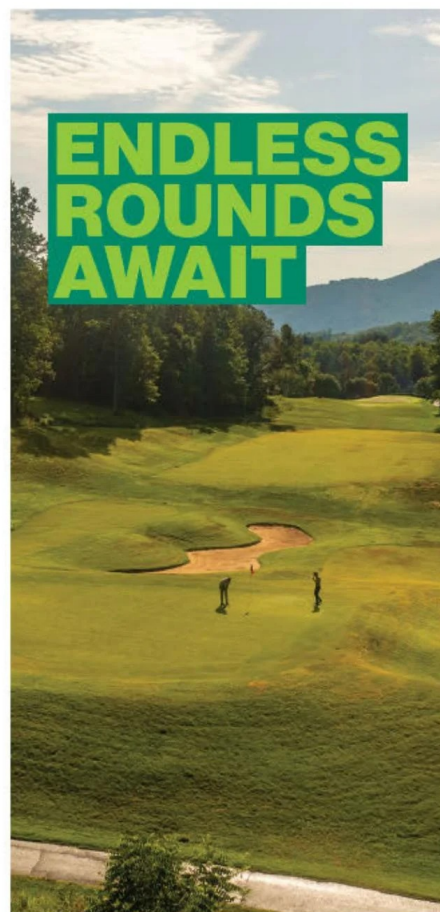
Among the flagship rides is a 13.5-mile out-and-back that leads from downtown to the **Blue Ridge Parkway** and 1,100-acre **Explore Park**. The route carries you through a half-dozen riverside parks and neighborhoods, providing panoramic views of the Roanoke Valley from Pine Mountain Overlook.

Stay at **The Hotel Roanoke**, which dates to 1883 and has been transformed by a \$14 million 2024 renovation. Spring for craft cocktails and fine dining at local favorite **Lucky Restaurant**. 🍷



The Roanoke River Greenway

ENDLESS ROUNDS AWAIT



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Use your phone to explore e-Adventures. When you Track Your Adventure on a Kids in Parks trail, you can earn prizes—a great extra incentive for your children!

- ◆ Woods Creek Trail - Jordan's Point Park
- ◆ Foxtrot Trail - Glen Maury Park
- ◆ Skyline Trail - Natural Bridge State Park
- ◆ Marl Creek Trail - McCormick Farm

DISC GOLF

- ◆ Disc Golf Course - Glen Maury Park
- ◆ Thistle Ridge Disc Golf Trail - Natural Bridge State Park
- ◆ Back Campus Disc Golf Course - Washington & Lee University

GEOCACHING

- ◆ Gems of Rockbridge Geocaching Trail

MORE TRAILS, PARKS & LAKES

Natural Bridge State Park

- ◆ Seven miles of trails including Cedar Creek, Blue Ridge and Buck Hill
- ◆ Children's Discovery Area
- ◆ International Dark Sky + Stargazing Events
- ◆ Accessible: RightHear + EnChroma-Adapted Viewfinders

Glen Maury Park

- ◆ Hiking + Bike Trails
- ◆ River Walk
- ◆ Kayak and Bike Rentals

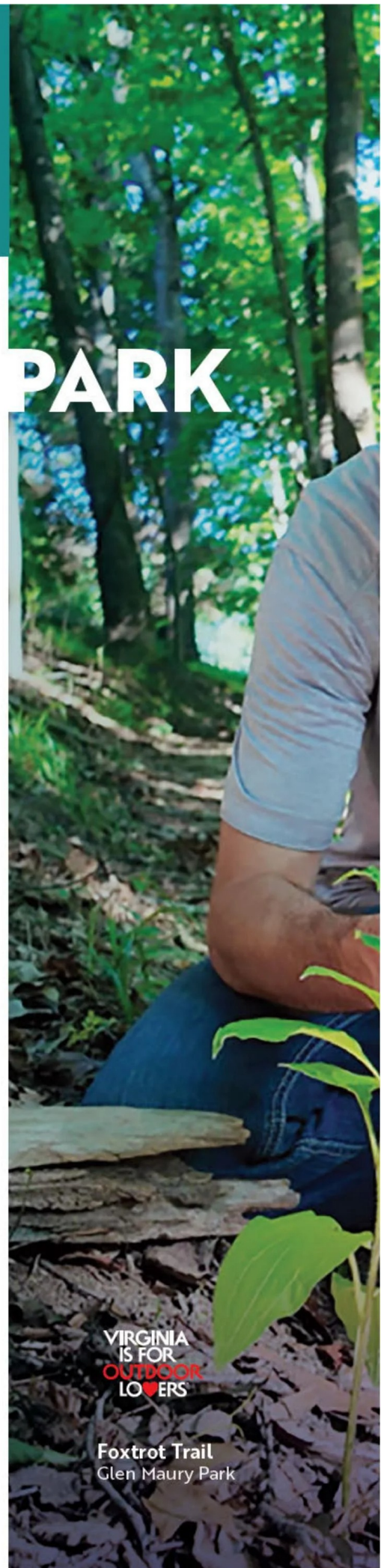
Boxerwood Nature Center and Woodland Garden

Chessie Nature Trail

Cave Mountain Lake Recreation Area

Lake Robertson

AND MANY MORE MILES TO EXPLORE!



VIRGINIA
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Foxtrot Trail
Glen Maury Park



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Brew Ridge Taps: Downtown Lexington
Devils Backbone Outpost Taproom & Kitchen: Lexington
Ecco Adesso Vineyards: Fairfield
Great Valley Farm Brewery & Winery: Natural Bridge
Halcyon Days Cider Company: Natural Bridge
Hardens: Downtown Lexington
Haywood's: Downtown Lexington
Heliotrope Brewery: Downtown Lexington
Jump Mountain Vineyard: Rockbridge Baths
Lexington Valley Vineyard: Rockbridge Baths
Rockbridge Vineyard & Brewery: Raphine
Salerno Wood Fired Pizza & Taphouse: Downtown Lexington
TAPS: Downtown Lexington

SEE YOU SOON!

Annual Events & Celebrations in Rockbridge County

Dates are being finalized and new events are added regularly. Join our email list or visit our website to see what's happening in Rockbridge County this weekend!

JUNE

- ♦ **Maury River Fiddlers Convention:** Glen Maury Park

JULY

- ♦ **Freedom Food Festival:** Downtown Lexington
- ♦ **Kid's Bike Parade:** Downtown Lexington
- ♦ **Fireworks:** Glen Maury Park
- ♦ **Balloons Over Rockbridge:** Virginia Horse Center
- ♦ **Beach Music Festival:** Glen Maury Park
- ♦ **Summer Breeze Wine Festival:** Rockbridge Vineyard & Brewery

AUGUST

- ♦ **Rockbridge Community Festival:** Downtown Lexington

SEPTEMBER

- ♦ **Rockbridge Beer & Wine Festival:** Lime Kiln Theater
- ♦ **Rockbridge Regional Fair & Expo:** Virginia Horse Center
- ♦ **Nothin' Fancy Bluegrass Festival:** Glen Maury Park
- ♦ **Thistle Ridge Throwdown & Disc Golf Family Fling:** Natural Bridge State Park

Cedar Creek Trail
Natural Bridge State Park



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SUMMER IN THE CITY

Your guide to fun, mostly free, very Richmond things to do all season long

*By Mary Margaret Clouse, Nataly Feliciano-Soto,
Mindy Kinsey, Harry Kollatz Jr., Laura Anders Lee,
Kelsey Robinson, Joan Tupponce and Melody Yuan*
Photo by Chad Williams / Creative Visual Design

The Lilly Pad
offers waterfront
dining and boat
rentals.

ENJOYING THE JAMES RIVER

James River Park System

Spanning both banks of the river, this 600-acre park offers swimming, sunning, tubing, bird watching, over 20 miles of hiking and biking trails, boat ramps and more. Free; jamesriverpark.org

Riverfront Canal Cruises

See the city in a new way on a narrated cruise down the river and Kanawha Canal. \$15; venturerichmond.com

Kayaking and Rafting

Venture out on the only urban Class IV white water rapids in the country; SUP rentals and guides are also available. From \$60 per person. Riverside Outfitters, riversideoutfitters.com; RVA Paddle-sports, rvapaddlesports.com

Discover the James Tours

Perfect for nature lovers, these 2 to 3-hour tours highlight the history of the river and its wildlife, including bald eagles. From \$110 per person; discoverthejames.com

Sea Suite Cruises RVA

Gather your squad and schedule a sightseeing, sunset, happy hour or brunch cruise aboard your choice of boat — paddle, tiki or retro. From \$40 per person; seasuitedcruises.com

"T-Pott" Bridge

The 1,600-foot-long T. Tyler Potterfield Memorial Bridge connects Brown's Island to Manchester. It is bike-friendly and accessible, and offers a stunning view of the city. Free; jamesriverpark.org

Fishing

Relax by the river as you cast your line for bass, catfish and more at Belle Isle, the North Bank Trail, Reedy Creek and other locations. Fishing license required; jamesriverpark.org; rvajamesriverfishingreport.com

WATERFRONT DINING

The Lilly Pad makes it easy to spend the day on the water. Located about 20 miles south of Richmond at Kingsland Marina, the restaurant offers an al fresco eating experience beside the James River. The menu includes burgers, brick oven pizza and seafood. Happy hour runs Tuesday to Friday, while weekends bring midday brunch and live bands in the evening. Boats are available to rent onsite. Max and Karen Walraven own both the marina and the restaurant. "You drive out here and can make an [entire] day of the river," Max says. "It's a unique dining experience because you're physically sitting on a dock right next to the water." lilypadrestaurant.com

• **Also consider:** *The Boathouse at City Point, Sunday Park and Rocketts Landing, theboathouse.com; Island Shrimp Co. at Rocketts Landing, islandshrimpcos.com; Casa del Barco at Canal Walk, casadelbarco.com; and Latitude Seafood Co. Chesterfield, latitudeseafoodco.com*



PUBLIC POOLS

Adults and children alike can slip, slide and swim at **Cobblestones Water Park** in Glen Allen. It offers two large swimming pools, an array of waterslides and a slower-paced children's area. The park has many shaded and sandy areas to lounge and picnic. A food court offers snacks for purchase; however, personal food is allowed (no alcohol). Passes start at \$18. cobblestonespark.com

• **Also consider:** *Richmond's city pools are free and open to the public: Battery Park Pool, Bellemeade Pool, Blackwell Pool, Fairmount Pool, Hotchkiss Field Pool, Powhatan Community Center, Randolph Public Swimming Pool, Swansboro Pool, Woodville Pool.*

On the Water

SPLASH PADS

Splash your way through the heat of the summer at **Taylor Farm Park** in Sandston, which opened in July 2024. A fully accessible splash area within the park offers mist mounds, an interactive play stream, shallow pools and mini waterfalls. The park also provides a "unique mix of activities for families and individuals," says Henrico Recreation and Parks Media Manager Pam Kemp. "Children can play on multiple playgrounds, and there are also scenic trails throughout the park." Other activities include a skate park, a BMX course, zip lines and picnic shelters. Free. henrico.gov/rec

• **Also consider:** *Twin Hickory Park & Recreation Center, Glen Allen, free, henrico.gov/rec; Waterway at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden, admission required, lewisginter.org*



Green Spaces



NATIVE NATURE

Three Lakes Park and Nature Center in Henrico County boasts a range of habitats filled with wildlife such as turtles, blue herons and barred owls. Keep an eye out for prothonotary warblers; local organizations are working to conserve the bright yellow birds. Accessible hiking and biking trails loop around the three lakes, and fields and forests fill the rest of the park. "Three Lakes Park offers playgrounds, picnic shelters, and a variety of paved and unpaved nature trails," says Jim Weinpress, manager of zoology at Henrico County Recreation and Parks. "The nature center is currently undergoing indoor and outdoor renovations which will highlight new exhibits showcasing native animals and ecosystems, past and present." Until the nature center reopens in August, the park's fields, forests and swamps are the perfect place to enjoy the outdoors and spot animals in their natural habitats. Free. henrico.gov/three-lakes

• **Also consider:** *Maymont*, maymont.org; *the VMFA lawn*, vmfa.museum; *Hollywood Cemetery*, hollywoodcemetery.org; *Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden*, admission required, lewisginter.org

YURT GONNA LOVE CAMPING

Camping enthusiasts need not travel far — **Pocahontas State Park** in Chesterfield offers campsites, cabins, lodges and yurts — the latter a dome-shaped dwelling halfway between a tent and a cabin. "If you do not need electricity and water at your site and want to try something different, we have our yurts, which are a modern adaptation of an ancient nomadic shelter," says Mike Biby, assistant park manager. Each yurt is surrounded by a deck with tables and a fire ring. The park also features hiking and biking trails, boat ramps and rentals, and a pool that is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Rental fees start at \$75/night. dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/pocahontas

• **Also consider:** *Powhatan State Park*, dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/powhatan; *Ed Allen's Campground and Cottages*, edallens.com; *Rockahock Campground*, rockahockcampground.com; and *Riverside Camp & Marina*, riversidecampandmarina.com



LIVING HISTORY

Richmond National Battlefield Park encompasses over a dozen Civil War battlefields and sites around the city of Richmond. "Cold Harbor would be our first location that I would recommend people to go to. There's a visitor center there, and bathrooms and trails and plenty of parking," says Stephanie Pooler, chief of interpretation and education at Richmond National Battlefield Park. On June 7 and 8, the park will commemorate the Battle of Cold Harbor with cannon and musket demonstrations and ranger programs. Free. nps.gov/rich

• **Also consider:** *Henricus Historical Park*; admission \$13, henricus.org

PARKS FOR EVERY INTEREST

Biking/Cycling

The fully paved, nearly 52-mile Virginia Capital Trail is a family-friendly scenic route for biking and offers tours, recreation and other attractions. virginiacapitaltrail.org

Disc Golf

Head to Bryan Park in North Side to play disc golf on a course rated 4.2 out of 5 by the Professional Disc Golf Association. friendsofbryanpark.org

Field Sports

Make the most of the sunny summer skies by playing soccer or baseball at public parks. va.gov/parks-recreation; henrico.gov/rec; chesterfield.gov/163/parks-and-facilities; ashland-va.gov/192/parks-recreation

Geocaching

Turn your hike into an adventure through the region with geocaching, a worldwide treasure hunt where hidden objects are found via GPS coordinates. geocaching.com

Outdoor Climbing

Get your adrenaline pumping by tackling the Manchester Climbing Wall or the boulders on the Buttermilk Trail in James River Park. Free; guides charge a fee. jamesriverpark.org/climbing

Skateboarding

Enjoy skateboarding or roller blading at the skate park at the newly renovated Southside Community Center on Old Warwick Road, which offers bowls, banks, ramps and more. Free. va.gov/parks-recreation

Tennis and Pickleball

Richmond offers outdoor public courts for pickleball and tennis at locations including Byrd, Battery and Forest Hill parks. richmondtennis.org/where-to-play; pickleheads.com

EVENTS CALENDAR

JUNE

Through July 20: Richmond Shakespeare Festival at Agecroft Hall & Gardens. \$22 to \$47. richmondshakespeare.org

June 7: Ashland Strawberry Faire at Randolph-Macon College. Free. ashlandstrawberryfaire.com

June 21: Henrico County's Juneteenth Celebration at Dorey Park. Free. henrico.gov/calendar/juneteenth

TBD: Chesterfield County's Juneteenth Celebration. Free. chesterfield.gov/5406/juneteenth

JULY

July 11-12: Hanover Tomato Festival at Pole Green Park. Free. hanovortomatofestival.com

July 17-20: Black Pride RVA. Multiple locations. Free and ticketed events. ugrcrva.org

AUGUST

Aug. 2: 804 Day (music and community celebration). 17th Street Market. Free. shockorecords.com/804day

Aug. 2: Richmond International Dragon Boat Festival. Rocketts Landing. Spectating and admission to the block party are free. mldb.gwnevents.com/richmond

Aug. 9: JamPacked Craft Beer & Music Festival. Brown's Island. \$45 to \$125. jampackedfest.com

Aug. 10: Carytown Watermelon Festival. Free. carytownwatermelonfestival.com

Aug. 22-30: Chesterfield County Fair. \$6 to \$12. chesterfieldcountyfair.org

Aug. 30: Richmond Comedy and Music Festival. Richmond Diversity Center. \$25 to \$35. eventbrite.com

TBD: Richmond Jazz and Music Festival. richmondjazzandmusicfestival.com

Festivals & Fairs

DELL, YEAH!

SpongeBob, D'Angelo and Prince tribute bands; wrestling accompanied by punk band Shagg Carpet; varieties of dance in "Unheard of Practices"; and the Afro-Caribbean musical "Once on This Island" are all on the roster for the **68th annual Festival of Arts at Dogwood Dell**.

"This'll be our longest season ever, going into September and October," enthuses Cameron Booth, program supervisor for the city's parks, recreation and community facilities. "The calendar is chock-full."

In addition, Booth says, "We'll have a plethora of our familiar offerings, the Multicultural Festival, the Fourth of July celebration, and a concert by Plunky & Oneness — the first artist of color ever to play on the Dell stage, so he's part of our history and tradition."

The Festival of Arts shows come with free admission, plenty of parking and food trucks. rva.gov/parks-recreation/dogwood-dell

BRINGING IT HOME

The Elegba Folklore Society will present the **34th Down Home Family Reunion: A Celebration of African American Folklife** on Aug. 16 at Jackson Ward's Abner Clay Park. The festival features world music and dance, a Heritage Market, and children's events.

"Attendees who come every year and those who come for the first time say, overwhelmingly, that this program is important to them," says Elegba Director Janine Bell. "They particularly remember the festival's very peaceful, family-friendly environment that exhibits beautiful Black excellence and allows people to appreciate education, music and heritage." efsinc.org



PRIDE-FULL SUMMER

Through its Virginia Pride program, Diversity Richmond presents LGBTQ+ events from June into September.

Summer of Pride kicks off June 1 with "Recovery Pridefest" at Diversity Richmond and "Pride in the Garden" at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden.

"We're evolving all our different events," says James Millner of Virginia Pride. "This is for the dual purpose of enabling Richmond to celebrate Pride Month, and we'll have our community and hometown events."

Other highlights include "Pride Night at The Diamond" on June 13 and "Love on Tap" at Hardywood Park Craft Brewery's Ownby Lane location on June 28. The summer celebration culminates on Sept. 27 with the 46th annual VA Pridefest at Midtown Green (formerly the Bon Secours Training Center). For the full schedule, visit diversityrichmond.org.



GLOW GOLF

"It's a place that will blow your mind," says Nick Cumba about the **Monster Mini Golf** franchise he will open later this year at Regency Mall. "This is a 100% family-friendly entertainment space, local to the area, in our community, and we are really excited," he says. The 18-hole indoor miniature golf course will glow in the dark and feature large, interactive, animatronic monsters. A DJ will spin tunes in a booth on the course. The facility will also offer two lanes of state-of-the-art duckpin bowling, an arcade, and two haunted mansion-themed party and event rooms. It will be decorated throughout with locally inspired custom murals. "There's nothing like this in Richmond," Cumba says. "That's what sets us apart." monsterminigolf.com (search for Tuckahoe)



• **Also consider:** *Hotel Greene*, hotelgreene.com; *Puttery Richmond*, puttery.com; *Patterson Golf Park*, pattersongolfpark.com; and *Bogeys Sports Park*, bogeysports.com

JUMP AROUND

Whether you're looking to practice parkour, perfect your Ninja Warrior moves, get your dunk on or just jump around, **Sky Zone** is the place to be. The trampoline park has three locations in the area, each offering a unique mix of attractions — including glow-in-the-dark sessions. "What truly sets Sky Zone apart is its ability to elevate the ordinary into the extraordinary, turning a rainy Tuesday or birthday celebration into a memory-making moment filled with laughter, movement and joy," says Mike Revak, Sky Zone's COO. Tickets from \$17; memberships available. skyzone.com/richmond

• **Also consider:** *Urban Air Adventure Park*, urbanair.com/virginia-glen-allen/; *Surge Adventure Park*, surgefun.com

THRILLS

Axe Throwing

Challenge your friends to hit the target — it's harder than it looks. Minimum age 12-13 years; \$25-\$35 per person. Stumpy's Hatchet House, stumpysshh.com/richmondva; Shield N Sheath, shieldnsheath.com; The Virginia Axe Company, thevirginiaaxecompany.com

Indoor Climbing

Try bouldering or rope climbing in a controlled (and padded!) environment. Day pass \$15-\$25. Triangle Rock Club, trianglerockclub.com/richmond; Peak Experiences, peakexperiences.com

Go-karts

K1 Speed offers high-octane thrills for the whole family with electric go-kart racing on its winding indoor track. \$26.95 single race, k1speed.com

Laser Tag

Don't let the kids have all the fun — put on a laser pack and pretend you're a spy in a dark (and air-conditioned!) maze. From \$12 per player. Mission Laser RVA, missionlaserrva.com; SkateNation Plus, richmondskating.com

Ropes Courses

Traverse nets, rope bridges, zip lines and more at Canopy Adventure Park, canopyrva.com. Metro Richmond Zoo's Treetop Zoofari, treetopzoofari.com adds aerial views of the animals. From \$35.

Indoor Skating

Nostalgia is in! Beat the heat with all-skate and limbo at Roller Dome, rollerdome.com and Ashland Skateland, ashlandskateland.com. From \$6 plus skate rental. For indoor ice skating, hit SkateNation Plus. \$16 plus skate rental. richmondskating.com

Fun & Games

GROWN-UP GAMES

You know the three "R's," but what about the three "P's" — padel, pickleball and pizza? That's what you'll find at **Padel Plant**, a social hub located in a former hydroelectric power plant on the Canal Walk. It offers two indoor pickleball courts, five padel courts (padel is another type of racquet sport), an Italian-style pizzeria, and a cafe featuring pastries, coffee and beer. "This is a very dynamic place. Anyone can get going right away," says Alex Nordheimer, who co-founded the business with his twin brother, Sam. "We have the perfect balance of indoor and outdoor courts." Court fees from \$10; memberships available. padelplant.com

• **Also consider:** For bowling, bands and beer, try *River City Roll*, rivercityroll.com; *Uptown Alley*, uptownalleyrichmond.com; and *The Park*, thepark.com



TOURS WITH UNIQUE RIDES

Bicycles

Sightsee at an idyllic pace on a retro-inspired bike with a wicker basket for your goodies. Tours from \$105 with your bike; from \$115 with rental. basketandbike.com

Charter Bus

Book a custom tour in a 14-passenger bus; guests can bring their own food, drinks and music. From \$100/hour; discoverrichmondtrips.com/charter-bus-rentals

GEM Cars

Zip around in a GEM car — a battery-powered electric vehicle that tops out at 35 mph — during a guided tour. \$40; rvaonwheels.com/gemcar

Limousines

Sightsee in style by booking a limousine to tour wineries, breweries or a custom itinerary of sights around the city. jameslimousine.com

Segways

Discover all Richmond has to offer by joining a Segway tour of landmarks, street art, historic neighborhoods and more. From \$50 per person; rvaonwheels.com/segway

Trolleys

With public and private tour options, hopping onto a trolley is a great way to see the city with a group. From \$30 per person; rvaonwheels.com/trolley

Tuk Tuks

RVATukTuk offers transportation services for group outings and sightseeing tours in three-wheeled open-air limos. From \$165 per tuk tuk; rvatuktuk.com

Walking

Immerse yourself in the city (and get your steps in) while trying new food, learning cultural history and more. From \$20. Discover Richmond Tours, discoverrichmondtrips.com; Elegba Folklore Society, efsinc.org/tours

SUMMERTIME SCARES

Spooky stories lurk around every corner in Richmond's historic districts. Tag along with **Haunts of Richmond** on a spine-tingling tour like *Shadows of Shockoe*, *Church Hill Chillers*, *Phantoms of Franklin* or *Creepy Tales on Campus*. Those with a sixth sense may even summon the spirits of Edgar Allan Poe, Chief Justice John Marshall and novelist Ellen Glasgow. Haunts of Richmond president Beth Houlihan says the tours are fun for all ages. "It's like hearing a ghost story around a campfire," she says. Tours are Thursday-Sunday; \$25/person or \$30 for walk-ups. hauntsofrichmond.com

• **Also consider:** *Richmond Ghosts*, rva.ghosts.com; *Strange RVA*, strangervva.com



REDISCOVER RICHMOND

When you live in one of the country's most historic cities, there's always more to learn. **The Richmond Tour Guys** take groups through 400 years of history, whether on a public tour of downtown and Capital Square or a private tour spotlighting Hollywood Cemetery, Monument Avenue, Civil War battlefields, Richmond's murals and more.

"It's amazing how many Richmonders haven't seen all the sights," says owner Ray Kaufman. One highlight is the George Washington Equestrian Monument in Capital Square featuring Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall and other local legends. "It's one of the most incredible collections of statues all in one place," Kaufman says.

Another lesser-known stop is Monumental Church on Broad Street, which was built to honor those who died in the 1811 Richmond Theatre fire. Their remains are buried beneath the altar. Public tours start at \$37.50 for adults. richmondtourguys.com

• **Also consider:** *RVA Explore Tour*, rva.explore.tour.com; *The Valentine*, thevalentine.org; *Walking the Ward* with Gary Flowers, walkingtheward.com

Take a Tour



PARTY ON WHEELS

Richmond was just named runner-up for best beer town by USA Today's 10 Best. A great way to explore the Richmond Beer Trail is with **Pedal Pub RVA** on a 12-seat bike, complete with a bar and designated driver. You can also give Richmond's top distilleries a spin on the Scott's Addition Cocktail Tour with stops at Reservoir Distillery, Cirrus Vodka, Pinky's and more. While the tours have been popular for girls' nights out and bachelor parties, owner Adam Seale says they've been booking a lot of corporate outings. "We can fully cater private tours to whatever the group wants," he says. Seats on the public tour start at \$40/person and private tours start at \$449. pedalpub.com

• **Also consider:** *RVA Brew Crew*, rvabrewcrew.com. Find the Richmond Beer Trail and Richmond Mimosa Trail at visitrichmondva.com.

Traditions

HIT A THEME PARK

Kings Dominion has added another heart-stopping ride to its roster: Rapterra, the world's tallest and longest launched wing roller coaster. With seats on both sides of the track rather than atop it, Rapterra gives riders an exhilarating experience as they soar 145 feet above the park through loops, a corkscrew and a 360-degree roll during the 90-second ride. The coaster debut kicked off Kings Dominion's 50th anniversary "Golden Summerbration," packed with entertainment and limited-time treats. "This year at Kings Dominion is going to be one you won't want to miss," says Geoffrey Zindren, director of public relations and communications. Tickets start at \$42. kingsdominion.com



VISIT THE ZOO

"We're excited to celebrate our 30th anniversary as there are new opportunities, new experiences and new animals for guests to enjoy," says **Metro Richmond Zoo** communications manager Taylor Andelin. The zoo recently welcomed three new lemurs and a baby giraffe, while pygmy hippo Poppy made her outdoor debut in April. More than 2,000 other animals across 190 species call the zoo home. Plus, explore the zoo from above on two zip line courses. The children's Junior Explorer Course and all-age Treetop Zoofari Course have both been updated with enhanced safety measures. Tickets \$26.95 adults, \$20.95 kids; obstacle courses extra. metrorichmondzoo.com

• **Also consider:** *The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts*, vmfa.museum, *the Institute for Contemporary Art at Virginia Commonwealth University*, icavcu.org, and *the Virginia State Capitol*, viriniacapitol.gov, all offer free admission.

GO TO THE MOVIES

Located 35 miles west of Richmond, the **Goochland Drive-In Theater** provides a nostalgic, family- and pet-friendly movie night under the stars. Open weekends only, the theater screens double features at affordable prices, has sections for both car and lawn viewing, and offers vegan and gluten-free options at concessions. Owner John Heidel shares tips for those new to the drive-in: All tickets must be purchased online, in advance; aim to arrive 90 minutes early because the gates close 20 minutes before showtime; and don't bring in outside food or alcohol. "The world seems divided, but here, everyone gets along and has a good time — it tells me we're not as different as we may seem," Heidel says. Tickets start at \$25 per vehicle. goochlanddriveintheater.com

• **Also consider:** *BTM Movieland at Boulevard Square*, btmcinemas.com; *The Byrd Theatre*, byrdtheatre.org.

IN THE STANDS

Auto Racing

August 14-16 is the Cook Out 400 Weekend at Richmond Raceway, culminating in Saturday's NASCAR Cup Series race. From \$39 single day ticket; richmondraceway.com

Baseball

Catch the Richmond Flying Squirrels during their last season at The Diamond, or enter the ticket lottery for the Tri-City Chili Peppers' glow-in-the-dark Cosmic Baseball. Single game tickets from \$13; milb.com/richmond; chilipeppersbaseball.com

Cricket

Mix up your usual sports outings by attending a cricket game; adults play through June and youths play until August. Free. crickclubs.com/cricketingrichmond; richmondyouthcricket.org

Fishing

All-star fishing enthusiasts compete at Osbourne Landing during the fifth stop of the 2025 Tackle Warehouse Invitational June 20-22. Free; majorleaguefishing.com

Horse Racing

Colonial Downs hosts races Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays July 9 to September 13, plus their Festival of Racing August 9. General admission is free; rosiesgaming.com/racing

Soccer

Watch the Richmond Ivy women's team through June and the Richmond Kickers men's team until October. From \$14 (Kickers), \$9 (Ivy); richmondkickers.com or richmondivy.com

Tennis

Watch the River City Slam Wheelchair Tennis Tournament June 5-8 or the Mercedes-Benz Greater Richmond Open and 40s Championship June 16-20. Free; richmondtennis.org or sportable.org/river-city-slam



Carytown's Art Deco-style illuminated welcome sign was installed in October 2024.

WORD ON THE STREET

After several years of flux, including the pandemic lull and a building boom, what is Carytown's new normal?

by Ian Stewart

Years ago, when Dustin Richardson and his coworkers at Bamboo Cafe were killing time, they'd play a game about Carytown.

"The idea was that you could get anything in Carytown except for cars and guns," Richardson says. "So, you'd list three items and then the other person would have to say where in Carytown you could get those items."

Richardson, who's lived in and around Carytown for 30 years and now works for a state agency, says there were so many retail offerings — everything from hardware stores to bakeries — that it was tough to stump someone. "One time I played the game, and I said, 'Let's see, darts for a dartboard, a pork pie hat and a king cake,'" Rich-

ardson says. "Beck and Little was the name of the place that sold sporting goods. Ignatius Hats sold the hats, and then, of course, Jean-Jacques would have a king cake."

Just as easily, one could tweak the game to name businesses that have come and gone along the 10-block stretch; Carytown encompasses West Cary Street and the surrounding blocks from North Thompson Street to North Arthur Ashe Boulevard. It currently boasts 227 businesses, from Agee's Bicycles to Zorch Pizza — although by press time, Ten Thousand Villages will likely have closed, and one or more new businesses may have opened.

Change is a constant in Carytown, along with complaints about parking, grumbling about chain stores and talk of closing Cary Street to cars. >

While some see turnover among the strip's retail and restaurant businesses as problematic, others say the area has rebounded from a spate of recent closures and is planning for the future with a new proposal to create a business district. Last year, the retail corridor literally hung up a welcome sign, so we went to ask merchants and residents about the current vibe in Carytown.

STATUS UPDATE

On one of those surprisingly warm days in mid-March, Cary Street was bustling. At The Byrd Theatre, Benjamin C. Cronly, executive director of The Byrd Theatre Foundation, confirms that shoppers and diners have returned to Carytown after the pandemic lull. However, he gives the area's new stores mixed reviews. "I've seen a lot of new mom-and-pop shops and a lot of new cultural and local stores," Cronly says. "But also, you see the big chains coming in ... [and] a lot more tobacco companies. ... It's not the Carytown feel and vibe, if you will."

At the nearby New York Deli, owner Demetrios Tsipsis sounds more optimis-

tic. "I think, from what I've seen, [Carytown] definitely has improved," he says. New York Deli first opened in 1929 and has moved once since then — across the street. Tsipsis bought the restaurant in 2004 and owns the building. "[Carytown is] quirky. It's unique. It's got nightlife. It's got small shops," he says.

A few doors down at World of Mirth, owner Thea Brown says, "I actually think Carytown is busier than it's ever been." The toy store has been in the same location since 1999, and Brown has worked there since 2004. "I remember the days where we were just waiting for somebody to come in the door," she adds.

Jim Bland, the owner of Plan 9 Music, has been in Carytown since 1981; his shop is now in its fifth location in the neighborhood. "I've seen a lot of changes, of people coming and going, either retiring and getting out of the business or moving on elsewhere that seemed to suit them," he says. Bland mentions Rostov's coffee shop, which moved to Main Street in pursuit of more affordable rent; Ellman's Dancewear, which relocated to Patterson Avenue for

customer convenience and parking; and Guitar Works, which cited cost when it closed in 2018 after 40 years in Carytown.

"It's good to watch how Carytown has evolved just in the 15 years that I've been here," is how local resident Heather Garrett Flores puts it as she steps out of Minglewood Bake Shop, the vegan bakery that took over the Guitar Works space in 2021. The bakery is one of Garrett Flores' favorite new spots on Cary Street.

Garrett Flores says today's Carytown is very livable and walkable. "I take my bags, I walk to the grocery store, I walk to markets," she says. "I go to the salons here and meet friends for coffees, for lunch, for happy hours in the neighborhood. ... I have a 4-year-old who loves Carytown, loves walking in Carytown. Even as a little toddler, when we would be turning off to go home, he would reach his arms out to be like, 'Stay walking.'"

'A PREMIER LOCATION'

While many merchants and residents are enthusiastic about Carytown, they also voice concerns about issues such as rent, parking and the mix of businesses in the retail area.

"There are multiple empty spaces right now," Cronly says of the blocks near The Byrd. "I think part of that is rent being high and [it] being a premier location. Some new startups just can't afford it."

For Cody Jones, owner of Toy Lair, affordability wasn't an issue when he opened in 2021. "The rent was totally doable," he says. However, after three years in Carytown, Jones recently moved to Broad Street. "One reason why I didn't re-sign the lease is because they were going to jack [my rent] up by about \$1,000."

Jones' experience isn't unique.

Brown says of World of Mirth, "When I came in during the early 2000s, [rent] was in the \$3K range. Now we are over \$6K. We have a 3% rise every year, which, if it's a good year, is not a problem." However, the small but steady increase was an issue during the pandemic, she says. "At that time, I didn't have a landlord that





Seen here in 1947, Cary Court was the genesis of Carytown as a retail area.

was willing to work with us. We definitely got hit pretty hard."

The toy store's reputation as a neighborhood staple has helped it weather a number of downturns — and landlords — over the years, Brown says. "We're kind of an anchor store here," she explains. "I just think people understand that we're a long-term tenant and part of the culture of Carytown."

Bev's Homemade Ice Cream & Cafe, a Carytown mainstay since 1998, has a similar precarious stability. Co-owner Erin Bottcher, who took over the shop when its founder, Beverly Mazursky, retired in 2021, says, "I think for where we are in Carytown, we have a decent deal. ... Would we like it to be lower? Of course, but I think that's anywhere that you're renting. We have a long-term lease, which helps stabilize some of the rent. At least we know how much it's going to go up every year."

PARKING PROBLEMS

Although Jones misses the vibe of Carytown, he says moving Toy Lair to Broad Street has afforded him more space, more customer traffic and, importantly, parking. "We have a parking lot, and that's

something that people complain about in Carytown all the time," Jones says.

Parking is top of mind for many shop owners, although it is more plentiful now than in years past thanks to the free, 500-space parking deck that was built in 2020 as part of the Carytown Exchange project. In addition, the city offers two paid parking structures, and there is free parking along both sides of Cary Street, on side streets and at Cary Court.

"The biggest factor that causes a lot of people to avoid Carytown, I think, [is] parking," says John Haggai, the CEO and president of Burton's Grill & Bar at Carytown Exchange, as well as a co-founder of Tazza Kitchen. "Parking has always been a challenge."

Tsiptsis agrees, adding that parking also needs to be better advertised. "A lot of people don't know we have parking behind [New York Deli]," he says. "There needs to be better signage for the

parking decks, because so many tourists don't know the parking decks even exist."

Brown thinks there's normally enough parking in and around Carytown, but also admits, "During the holidays, it's nuts. People park on the wrong side of the road or block alleys." She would like to see more accessible parking spaces made >



John Haggai, CEO of the Massachusetts-based Burton's Grill & Bar

available and is also worried about being a good neighbor to nearby residents. "There's nothing worse than coming back with a ton of groceries and not being able to park anywhere near your house," she says.

TOE TO TOW

The regular annoyances of vehicles have led some to campaign to permanently close Carytown to cars. The effort stems in part from the success of the annual Carytown Watermelon Festival, which sees the streets packed with pedestrians every August while bands play and vendors sell everything from watermelon to watercolors.

Some residents, like Richardson, applaud the idea. "It's not pleasant to walk around," he says. "Waiting at the bus stop, there are people just flying down Cary Street at like 45 miles an hour."

He'd like to see Carytown create an area similar to Charlottesville's Downtown Mall, which was formed in 1976 by closing streets to cars. "There's parking garages," he explains. "You don't have to go into the [mall] area to park your car. You just park it nearby and then walk to [the mall]."

Business owners are more ambivalent about permanently closing the street to traffic.

"After much consideration and thought, I am against blocking off the street," New York Deli's Tsipsis says. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it. I think Carytown needs tweaking. It doesn't need an overhaul."

Bottcher says it's "a great idea" but needs to happen in a smart way. "There needs to be a lot more planning around parking, around diverting traffic flow," she says. Closing the street once a month seems "more viable in the short term," Bottcher adds.

World of Mirth's Brown sees both sides of the issue. Although it would be "lovely" for children to be able to play outside the store without worrying about traffic, she wonders what sort of infrastructure is required to implement such a change. "There would definitely have to be some solid changes made before we could ever

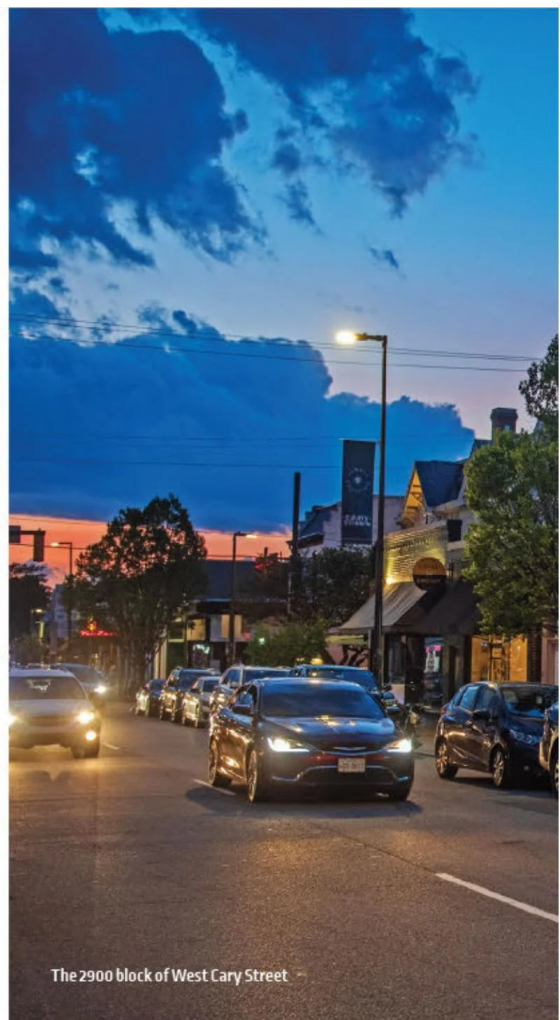
do that on a permanent basis," she says.

'SHORT PUMP CENTRAL'

While Carytown Exchange brought extra parking to the area, it also lured several national or regional chains to the neighborhood, including Burtons, Torchy's Tacos, Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Sweetgreen, Warby Parker and Monkee's Boutique. Although chains have been part of Carytown since the beginning, opinions are mixed.

Burtons' Haggai says a balance of chains and local shops is important, but he understands small business owners' frustrations when chains move in. "There's always been the stigma of chain restaurants. We kind of get a bad reputation," he allows. Haggai argues that chains started as local businesses. "Everyone starts [with one location] and grows from there," he says. "I think a lot of people have that aspiration to grow and multiply if they can."

Tsipsis says the chains have spurred local businesses to stay open later. "There was a time when you would come to Carytown, and it was dead after 6 o'clock. ... And I'm like, 'You guys complain that everybody's going to the mall. You know what you can do at a mall? Shop till 9



The 2900 block of West Cary Street

o'clock.' Now, the smaller places are staying open till 8, 9 o'clock," he says.

Others are more wary. Kamran Shaikh, the owner of T-Shirt Studio RVA and the 2024 Carytown Merchants Association president, says, "If they are competing with 10 of the smallest stores, then that's a



ASH DANIEL



ORIGIN STORY

Cary Street has had several names over the centuries, but it was called Westhampton Avenue in 1927, when City Council voted to rename it to honor Revolutionary War hero Archibald Cary, says Christina K. Vida, a curator at the Valentine museum. However, the new name was slow to catch on. When The Byrd Theatre opened on Christmas Eve 1928, a splashy story in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* gave the theatre's location as Westhampton Avenue.

The area around The Byrd began to grow in the 1930s when the shopping center now known as Cary Court opened. "It was called the Park and Shop," Vida says. "It was the first shopping center in Richmond, and when it first opened, it had 150 parking spots."

The Park and Shop was anchored by two grocery stores, A&P and Sanitary Grocery Co., evidence that chains have been part of Carytown since the beginning. Vida notes that one store advertised its location as West Cary Street, while the other, "literally next door," placed itself on Westhampton Avenue. "It took about 12 years for people to really commit to the West Cary Street address," she adds.

The area wasn't known as "Carytown" until the mid-1970s, Vita says. "The Carytown Association advertises that they have revived this Merchants Association and are hoping to do sidewalk sales and Fourth of July sales together to attract customers to this area" she explains. "And that's the first time where you really see 'Carytown' associated with the neighborhood."

problem. I think if the chains go over 25%, 30% of the total mix, we got a problem. That would be the tipping point."

Bottcher, whose ice cream shop is located near The Byrd, says competitors at the other end of the street, like Jeni's, don't necessarily impact her business, but admits, "It is frustrating to know there's a huge chain competitor that has access to company-wide marketing." She's thankful that her regulars have stuck with Bev's despite the advent of several ice cream chains over the years.

As a resident, Richardson doesn't like seeing chains in Carytown. "It definitely feels a lot more impersonal," he says. "It doesn't feel like the businesses there exist to serve the neighborhood; it feels like the businesses exist to serve tourists. ... I would like to see some care taken with Carytown before it becomes another Georgetown, before it basically becomes Short Pump central."

A NEW BIRD?

Solving these problems — or at least getting people together to discuss

them — falls to the Carytown Merchants Association.

A group of volunteers who own or rent brick-and-mortar businesses in the area, the CMA has represented Carytown for five decades. Perks of membership include a listing on the association website, carytownrva.com; social media boosts; and inclusion in a shopping guide. Responsibilities include keeping the streets clean, organizing events and publicity, and communicating with city officials.

According to Shaikh, "Less than 50% of the total businesses in Carytown are part of the CMA," which members think creates an unfair burden.

Getting more businesses to buy into overall upkeep is one reason many merchants support the creation of a Business Improvement and Recruitment District, or BIRD, for Carytown. Businesses and property owners would pay an agreed-upon fee into the district account, which would fund beautification projects and publicity — and perhaps a few other items on

▶ CONT'D ON P. 104



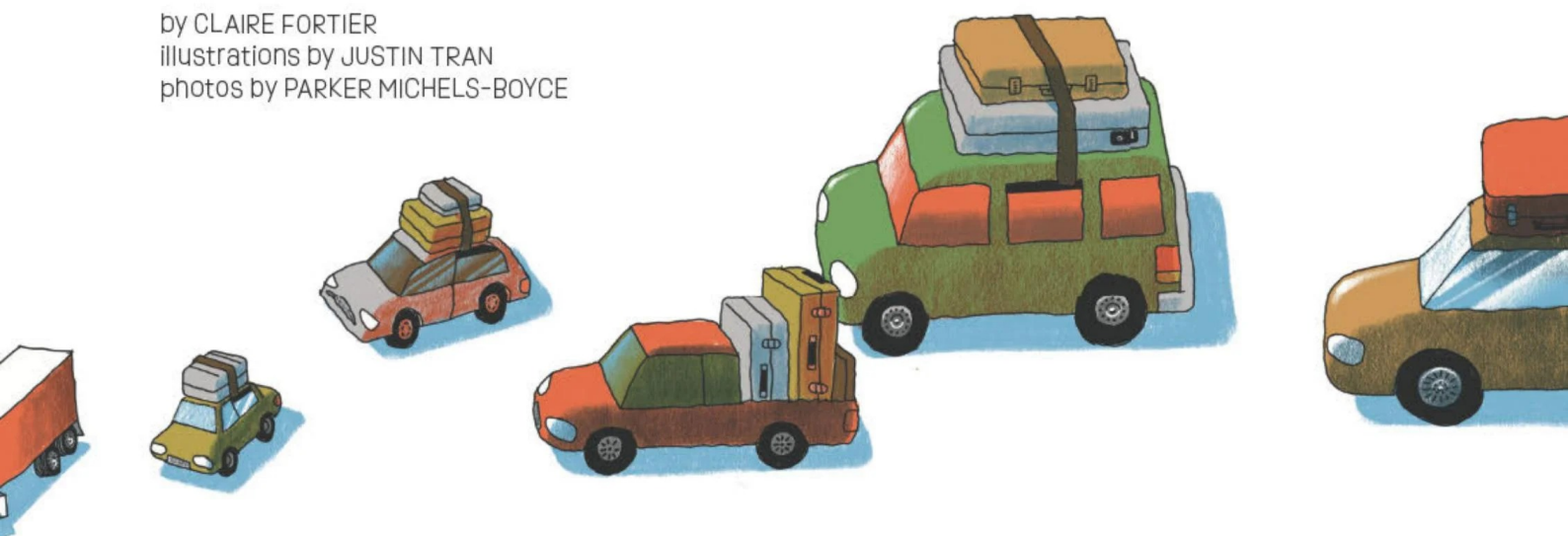
'GRACEFUL GROWTH'

AS MORE MOVE IN, RICHMOND'S SURROUNDING COUNTIES STRIVE TO MANAGE DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE

by CLAIRE FORTIER

illustrations by JUSTIN TRAN

photos by PARKER MICHELS-BOYCE



The Richmond region is attracting new residents at the highest level on record, according to Hamilton Lombard, a researcher with the University of Virginia's Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service.

"Over last year, there has been no letup in people moving in, predominantly out of Northern Virginia," Lombard says. "The Richmond metro region has been the highest in the state. In four years, 55,000 more people have moved into the area than out. In 2000, which was the last growth spurt, 36,000 more moved in than out over a four-year period. Petersburg, as well as a number of exurban Richmond-area localities, is attracting new residents at its highest rate since before the Second World War. And that's not slowing. Even the outlying areas are attracting a lot more moving in."

The reason for the runaway growth

is that "Richmond is almost a suburb of D.C.," Lombard says about the nation's capital. "There are a large number of people in the D.C. area who can work remotely at least part of the time. But there are also a number of companies who need to be near D.C. but don't want to locate there."

Managing the Influx

With available land drying up in the metro area, as well as in Henrico and Chesterfield counties, growth in both the housing and commercial sectors is putting enormous pressure on outlying counties including Goochland, Powhatan and New Kent. Managing that growth while maintaining the rural nature of those counties is a delicate balancing act.

"We are really growing," says Manuel "Manny" Alvarez, Goochland's interim county administrator. "We are the fastest-growing county in the state just behind New Kent. Between 2019 and 2023, we grew by about 14%. We haven't really seen this kind of growth in a while."

Alvarez, who served on the county's Board of Supervisors twice from 2012 to 2020 and was also interim county administrator in 2021, says that most residents in Goochland "would like to see graceful growth. Henrico has run out of room, so they are all looking at Goochland. It's hard because developers feel that we are against growth, but we are just trying to

manage growth appropriately."

Thoughtful guidance of residential development is common practice in metro Richmond's outlying localities. New Kent County, which has the highest growth rate in the state, is still a small, rural community, according to Rodney Hathaway, New Kent's county administrator since 2012.

"We project our population is just over 27,000, but with the rate of growth, that brings about a significant amount of change in the county. And we are experiencing that. We are seeing increased demands for services, demands for infrastructure. That's a challenge as far as staying ahead of that demand for services and keeping our infrastructure on pace with the growth here."

Growing gracefully is also possible because of a lack of water and sewer service in rural areas, among other things.

"If [those areas] don't have sewer and water, you must dig wells and septic systems. You can't have large PUDs [planned unit developments] if you don't have water and sewer, and the majority of those outlying counties don't. You really have to focus on areas where water and sewer is located, and a lot of that land has been developed," says Chad Joyce, a housing developer who spent 25 years with Ryan Homes and left to start his own business, Virginia Commonwealth Capital. >

Culture Clash

The other real impediment to housing development in rural areas, Joyce says, is pushback from residents. "There are very few zoning cases that get approved in those counties. As a developer, I don't even look at those counties because I know I have no chance of getting a development through due to rezoning."

Finding a home in outlying areas can be a challenge. "They like their land and don't want a ton of cookie-cutter communities," says Jason Burke of Burke Realty Group. "We can't find any homes for some of my clients due to lack of inventory."

For Chuck Bent, whom many people in Goochland call the "town crier" for his popular emails tracking the county's development, "rural" is not negotiable. "The rural character is something everyone who moved here holds near and dear. When we moved out here [to the eastern part of the county near Short Pump], the minimum was 3 acres for every house. Those standards have been eroded [since the county brought water and sewer in the Centerville section of the county], and now there are houses [on plots] as small as a quarter of an acre," he says. "People here don't want the Short Pump mindset and development."

Keeping the unique quality of a community is even more difficult when the county surrounding it is committed to residential development, such as the town of Ashland, located in the center of Hanover County.

"We have an expression: 'What makes Ashland 'Ashland'?" says the town's mayor, Steve Trivett. "The challenge for me in any application we get — in any plan for change — is, how can we not be dormant and become stagnant and unhealthy, but how can we grow and not lose our soul in the process?"

"I know there are a lot of places that haven't been able to retain their identity as growth goes around them. That's the big



Roxanne Salerno, director of economic development for Powhatan County

challenge for us. We have a great relationship with Hanover County, but you don't know what the county is going to want to do. So, we've focused on commerce."

Ashland's decision to focus on building entrepreneurial spirit instead of more homes is a response arrived at by many similar communities.

"Housing prices have gone up humongously," UVA's Lombard says. "Counties are trying to diversify away from where they are pulling taxes. E-commerce continuing to grow has really pushed counties to build warehouse space. Counties see this as a good way to diversify their economies."

"I don't think we are losing the rural character," says Roxanne Salerno, Powhatan's director of economic development. "I think that is something we are fighting really hard to make sure we preserve and maintain while also trying to carefully add in commercial as it comes through. The rural character is very important to our Board of Supervisors and our citizens, so we are doing as much as possible to keep the county the way it is but also look at different avenues on how we increase our revenue on the commercial side."

To Infinity ...

Recent comprehensive plans, both those approved and those in development, for the outlying counties, have been making the most of strategic locations for commercial development. New Kent is

about to close on an extensive long-range comprehensive plan to increase growth, particularly commercial expansion.

"Growth is also a good thing for the county. It presents a lot of opportunities. We are seeing economic development opportunities today that we wouldn't have seen years ago based on our population. We do believe that we can maintain our rural character and accommodate growth at the same time by strategically locating that growth within our county," Hathaway says.

"Our land-use plan concentrates growth along the four Interstate 64 interchanges, and the plan protects other areas of the county that we want to keep as rural," he adds. "We hope that if we allow the supply and density to occur in those strategic areas, it will relieve the pressure for growth in the other areas of the county. We want to keep rural."

The newest economic driver for New Kent is the proposed Buc-ee's travel center that will add 75,000 square feet of retail sales, 120 fueling positions and parking for more than 650 vehicles. The purveyor of beef brisket, souvenirs and more was supposed to open this year. However, major road construction projects, including widening I-64 at Exit 211, have pushed back that opening until 2027.



"We have a plan over the next three to four years to spend \$100 million to make improvements along that throughfare," Hathaway says. "Not only is Buc-ee's at that exit, a good portion of land surrounding it is designated for economic and industrial development, such as the 800,000-square-foot Auto Zone warehousing and distribution facility that opened at the beginning of this year. Last week, we announced a 1.4 million-square-foot Target distribution center there."

"Also at Exit 220, the West Point exit, is another large corridor we are focused on for economic development. We have CarMax building a large vehicle restoration and auction house facility that should open by the end of the summer. We have a large-site construction group, called Dolores Group, moving their headquarters there."

Manny Alvarez, interim county administrator, stands at the Project Rocky construction site in Goochland.

We are not looking for home growth. We are really looking for commercial growth.

—Manny Alvarez, Goochland's interim county administrator

... and Beyond

Goochland also has some major commercial plans for the eastern part of the county.

"We are not looking for home growth. We are really looking for commercial growth. That's what we go after," Alvarez says.

In particular, the proposed Rockville Opportunity Corridor is a massive warehouse development on Ashland Road near the I-64 interchange, home to an Amazon robotics fulfillment center. Dubbed Project Rocky, it will require its own alteration of I-64, with a diverging diamond interchange planned near the Manakin exit.

"We have asked the state for funding and have gotten a lot to improve [Ashland Road], which is a concern for businesses nearby. That area of Ashland Road has been business/commerce for a long time with Luck Stone, Vulcan and others. But Project Rocky is huge, so those improvements are needed," Alvarez says.

For Powhatan, which doesn't have the same easy access to an interstate, commercial development is more about the types of businesses they can attract.

"Route 60 is our main thoroughfare, and that's where most of our development goes," Salerno says. "Right now, we are working on a comprehensive plan update and saying, 'OK, instead of allowing pretty much any commercial [development] to come here, let's focus on light industrial and high-value commercial so we can get the best bang for our buck without spreading.'"

Finding the right mix of commercial real estate — to sustain government revenues — and new housing — to accommodate the influx of new residents without overwhelming rural communities — is a constant struggle.

"Placement and aesthetics make a difference," Ashland Mayor Trivett says. "Whenever you put a stick into the water, you will see a little eddy form around it. When you approve building plans, it's the same sort of thing. You want to try to anticipate as best you can the effect on the currents already flowing of people, their satisfaction and the local economy. Nobody can know the right mix with absolute 100% certainty." ■



Market Snapshot



New Home Closings and Average Sale Prices by Locality

JURISDICTION	2024		CHANGE IN CLOSINGS SINCE 2023		CHANGE IN AVG. PRICE SINCE 2023	
	CLOSINGS	AVG. PRICE	NUMBER	PERCENT	NUMBER	PERCENT
Caroline	239	\$398,190	20	9%	\$23,898	6%
Chesterfield	1,793	\$538,455	117	7%	\$31,069	6%
Goochland	245	\$746,383	-12	-5%	\$40,069	6%
Hanover	370	\$632,452	24	7%	-\$17,062	-3%
Henrico	992	\$499,200	109	12%	\$14,609	3%
New Kent	310	\$469,868	-47	-13%	\$35,941	8%
Powhatan	52	\$642,060	-46	-47%	-\$8,691	-1%
Richmond	306	\$534,838	19	7%	\$28,620	6%
Total	4,307	\$537,590	184	4%	\$20,863	4%

Source: Home Building Association of Richmond

Top 10 Subdivisions in Central Virginia Ranked by New Home Closings during 2024

RANK	SUBDIVISION	JURISDICTION	NEW HOME CLOSINGS	AVG. NEW HOME PRICE	PERMITS ISSUED
1	Harpers Mill	Chesterfield	186	\$658,483	124
2	The Groves at New Kent	New Kent	152	\$387,008	175
3	Pendleton	Caroline	144	\$409,812	165
4	Retreat at One	Henrico	128	\$385,333	171
5	Magnolia Green	Chesterfield	115	\$667,149	89
6	Chickahominy Falls	Hanover	112	\$586,480	83
7	River Mill	Henrico	109	\$634,662	111
8	Watermark	Chesterfield	102	\$381,586	59
9	Mosaic at West Creek	Goochland	93	\$706,727	81
10	Highlands	Chesterfield	88	\$703,326	86

Source: Home Building Association of Richmond

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

Average sale price:	Median sale price:
\$476,206 (+4.1%)	\$415,000 (+3.8%)
Percentage of original list price received:	Inventory of homes for sale in March:
99.7% (-0.6%)	1,068 (-5.3% vs. 2024)
Days on the market until sale:	
30 This year	23 Last year
Change in closed sales:	-3.3%

CONDOS & TOWNHOUSES

Average sale price:	Median sale price:
\$393,139 (+4.6%)	\$371,382 (+1.1%)
Percentage of original list price received:	Inventory of homes for sale in March:
98.3% (-1.8%)	496 (+30.2% vs. 2024)
Days on the market until sale:	
36 This year	34 Last year
Change in closed sales:	-3.5%

Unless otherwise noted, all figures are year-to-date averages for the Richmond metro area, which includes Chesterfield, Hanover and Henrico counties and the city of Richmond, and were sourced from the March 2025 Central Virginia Regional MLS Report dated April 10. Comparisons reference the year-to-date figures from March 2024.

Referred Real Estate Agents



In March, we distributed our Referred Real Estate Agents survey to 3,889 subscribers and 5,636 Realtors from a list provided by the Richmond Association of Realtors. We invited both groups to share the names of three real estate agents they would recommend to a friend or family member for their market knowledge, negotiation skills, professionalism, customer service and integrity. The agents below earned the most votes.

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Properties, Real Broker
804-245-9119
rivercityeliteproperties.com

Dee Anderson
RVA Realty &
Relocation
804-305-1819
rvarelo.com

Amy Beem
Samson Properties
804-516-1007
manorhouseva.com

Kelly Blanchard
Nest Realty
804-307-4499
nestrealty.com

Shana Bloom
Bloom Real Estate
804-767-2627
bloomrealestate.com

Phil Bonnie
Dudley Resources
757-651-1729
dudleyresources.auction

Phenice Boykins
eXp Realty
804-306-6289
mypowerhouse.realtor.com

Darlene Brent
Long & Foster
(Innsbrook)
804-937-6843
longandfoster.com

Joe Cafarella
River Fox Realty
804-212-7507
joecafarella.com

Rhonda Carroll
One South
Realty Group,
Samson Properties
804-815-0642
onesouthrealty.com

Bryan Chalk
Chalk Homes,
Napier ERA
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chalkhomes.com

Mike Chenault
Mike Chenault Group,
Hometown Realty
804-366-5302
mikechenaultgroup.com

Cabell Childress
Cabell Childress
Group, Long &
Foster (Midtown)
804-399-4007
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Leah Coleman
ICON Realty Group
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Angie Cooper
River Fox Realty
804-986-2133
riverfoxrealty.com

Sean Craft
Long & Foster
(Strawberry Street)
804-338-3800
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Kevin Currie
Kevin Currie Group,
Hometown Realty
804-928-1620
kevincurriegroup.com

Steve Davis
River Fox Realty
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The Davis Group,
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John Daylor
Daylor-Stiles Team,
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Ernie Dettbarn
Dettbarn Real Estate
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dettbarnreal.estate.com

Tondra Devarel
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
804-307-1018
srmfre.com

Ainsley Dillon
The Dillon Group,
Real Broker
804-937-8016
dillongroupre.com

Mair Downing
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
804-245-4462
srmfre.com

John S. Finn Jr.
United Real Estate
Richmond
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Susan Fisher
Long & Foster
(Strawberry Street)
804-338-3378
longandfoster.com

Linda Forem
Jenny Maraghy Team,
Compass
804-869-4861
compass.com

Kayla Foster
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
804-997-9191
kayla-foster.com

Paul Gee
Long & Foster
(Westham)
804-986-5485
longandfoster.com

Page George
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Estate Boutique
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maisonvirginia.com

Debbie Gibbs
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
804-402-2024
thesteelegroupsir.com

Mark Goad
The Good Life RVA
804-358-3684
thegoodliferva.com

Elliott Gravitt
Providence Hill
Real Estate
804-405-0015
phrehomes.com

Melissa Grohowski
Long & Foster
(Midlothian)
804-651-1595
longandfoster.com

Kay Grubich
Long & Foster
(Innsbrook)
804-503-1990
longandfoster.com

Meg Grymes
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
804-282-3136
thesteelegroupsir.com

Elizabeth Hagen
Joyner Fine Properties
804-241-6156
elizabethhagen.realestate.com

Shannon Harton
The Harton Team,

Nest Realty
804-514-4257
thehartonteam.com

Katherine Hawks
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
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Sally Hawthorne
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
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Realty Group,
Samson Properties
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Annemarie Hensley
Team Hensley,
Compass
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teamhensley.com

Ann Carter Herbert
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
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thesteelegroupsir.com

Neil Hodge
Small & Associates
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Rebecca Horton
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riverfoxrealty.com

Shonda Howie
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Sarah Huffman
River City Real Estate
Co., eXp Realty

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Erin Hungerford
Long & Foster
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Chris Iguchi
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Matt Jarreau
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Group, Hometown
Realty
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georgerva.com

Chip Jones
Dudley Resources
804-873-8593
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Patrick Judy
The Hogan Group
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hogangrp.com

Daniel Keeton
Keeton & Co.
Real Estate
804-492-7638
lovevarealestate.com

Tracy Kerzanet
The Kerzanet Group
804-876-0956
thekerzanetgroup.com

Anousheh Khalili
River Fox Realty
804-274-9723
riverfoxrealty.com

Dakia Knight
The KEY Team,
ICON Realty Group
804-763-9063
thekeysinrichmond.com ➤

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Referred Real Estate Agents



Kristin Beran Krupp
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
804-873-8782
srmfre.com

Anna Catherine Lake
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
804-840-0710
srmfre.com

Nicole Lee
Samson Properties
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Tonya Leeper
TL Realty,
Keller Williams
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Robin Levey
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(Grove)
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Andrea Levine
One South Realty
Group, Samson
Properties
804-647-2828
andrealevine.com

LaDonna Lewis
The KEY Team,
ICON Realty Group
804-852-0710
thekeysin
richmond.com

Shane Lott
Lott Realty Group,
Rashkind Saunders
& Co.
804-382-8352
lottrealtygroup.com

Daphne MacDougall
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
804-399-5842
thesteelgroup
sir.com

Marguerite Mankins
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
804-382-7460
thesteelgroup
sir.com

Erin Melton
The Melton Team,
eXp Realty
804-335-8572
meltonteam.com

Teresa Melton
Berkshire Hathaway
HomeServices
PenFed Realty
804-334-7560
tmeltonreal
estate.com

Maya Messer
Long & Foster
(Innsbrook)
804-572-8033
longandfoster.com

Ann Mitchell
The Kerzanet Group
804-356-3728
thekerzanetgroup.
com

Leslie Marie Moseley
Real Broker
678-770-3178
lesliemariemoseley.
com

Rachel Nance
The Nance Group,
Compass
804-366-8805
nanceva.com

James Nay
River City Elite Prop-
erties, Real Broker
804-704-1944
jamesnay.com

Kong Nou
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's Interna-
tional Realty
804-241-3494
thesteelgroup
sir.com

Ana Nuckols
River City Real Estate
Co., eXp Realty
240-507-3362
ilovelivinginva.com

Jonathan Orcutt
Maison Real Estate
Boutique
804-241-9194
maisonvirginia.com

Rebecca Orcutt
Maison Real Estate
Boutique
804-241-9194
maisonvirginia.com

Whitney Pace
Long & Foster
(Grove)
804-614-6080
longandfoster.com

Andrew Parham
KINFOLK at
Hometown Realty
804-726-4526
kinfolkre.com

Lizzy Pass
The Pace of
Richmond,
Keller Williams
Richmond West
804-840-2686
thepaceof
richmond.com

Lavonya Payne
River City Real Estate
Co., eXp Realty
757-593-6059
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Jenna Powell
The Good Life RVA
804-497-9765
thegoodliferva.com

Lauren Renschler
The Yeatman Group,
Long & Foster
(Centerpointe)
804-402-4974
theyeatmangroup.
com

Sallie Rhett
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
804-399-6384
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Carrie Robeson
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
804-405-5923
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realtor.com

**Coleen Butler
Rodriguez**
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
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coleenbutler
rodriguez.com

Sheri Rosner
Long & Foster
(Westham)
804-229-5508
longandfoster.com

Brad Ruckart
Ruckart Real Estate,
Real Broker
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ruckartre.com

Seth Schemahorn
The Pace of
Richmond,
Keller Williams
Richmond West
804-374-9915
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richmond.com

Mary Self
The Dillon Group,
Real Broker
804-304-6466
dillongroupre.com

Holly Shaheen
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
804-218-7654
srmfre.com

Scott Shaheen
Shaheen, Ruth,
Martin & Fonville
804-837-8500
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Lollie Shankle
Long & Foster
(Grove)
804-855-4222
longandfoster.com

Jennie Barrett Shaw
The Steele Group,
Sotheby's
International Realty
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thesteelgroup
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Sarah Kate Shepherd
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Real Estate
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Phillip Skaggs
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Estate Boutique
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Mary Soroka
Mission Realty,
Real Broker
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missionrealty.com

Sheila Stanley
Team Hensley,
Compass
804-387-1977
teamhensley.com

Karen Stephens
Long & Foster
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longandfoster.com

Tiffany Hite Stevens
Tiffany Hite
Stevens Group
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Stewart**
Charles A. Rose Co.
804-288-4820
charlesarose.com

Donna Stewart
Samson Properties
804-357-2082
donnasellsrva.com

Ivy Stewart
Real Broker
804-638-4826
ivysellsrva.com

Emily Still
The Yeatman Group,
Long & Foster
(Centerpointe)
804-639-4663
theyeatman
group.com

James Strum
The Strum Group,
Long & Foster
(Grove)
804-432-3408
thestrumgroup.com

Melanie Sutherland
Rick Cox
Realty Group
804-595-1576
rickcoxrealty.com

Kyle Taylor
River City Elite Prop-
erties, Real Broker
804-314-1294
rivercityelite
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Amy Lee Tesauo
Linchin Real
Estate Group
804-467-1881
linchinreal
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Randi Tormollen
Long & Foster
(Innsbrook)
804-439-9000
longandfoster.com

Kelly Trask
One South Realty
Group, Samson
Properties
804-304-0312
onesouthrealty.com

Meg Traynham
Providence Hill
Real Estate
804-356-9045
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Dan Tulli
Joyner Fine
Properties
804-836-9204
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Alease Washington
ICON Realty Group
804-519-7840
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Craig Waterworth
Ruckart Real Estate,
Real Broker
804-305-3639
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Marianna Wiley
One South Realty
Group, Samson
Properties
540-476-2915
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Max Williams
United Real Estate
Richmond
804-402-7788
unitedrealestate
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Catherine Willis
Linchin Real
Estate Group
804-338-5397
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Erica Winn
Front Door Realty,
Real Broker
804-683-4723
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Kyle Yeatman
The Yeatman Group,
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merchants' wish lists.

"My number one thing for Carytown would be public restrooms," Brown says. "We don't have any. We need public restrooms."

In July 2024, Richmond City Council adopted a resolution instructing the Department of Economic Development to hire a consultant to work with property and business owners to discuss whether a business district would be beneficial and outline an ordinance to establish one. But the BIRD is "still up in the air" said Shaikh at the end of April

The problem? Many of the chains don't want to buy into the BIRD, Shaikh says. A few of them originally seemed interested in the idea, he adds, but then the business owners proposed a fee schedule based on square footage. "When the numbers came to crunch, they kind of pulled out their support," he says. That stalled the proposal.

It's a sore point for Tsipsis. "I'm extremely disappointed that Kroger and some of the other bigger corporations weren't

involved. Hopefully they'll change their mind," he says.

James Menees, corporate affairs manager for Kroger Mid-Atlantic, says the company is "supportive of initiatives that build community and [enjoys] serving the community in many ways, including sponsorships of the 10K, Feed More and, really, nonprofits across the area through our community rewards program." However, he declined to comment on the BIRD.

Reps. Stephanie Lynch, 5th District, who represents Carytown, and Reva Trammell, 8th District, co-sponsored the resolution. In an emailed statement, Lynch says, "The BIRD initiative will help enhance the shopping experience for both locals and tourists by fostering thoughtful improvements, supporting small businesses and attracting new, complementary retailers. It's a smart investment in the future of Carytown that builds on its legacy while positioning it for continued success."

Despite the lack of action on the BIRD, many of the businesses are happy with

their interactions with the city. "I think they've always been helpful. I hear people complain about the city, but they respond," Tsipsis says, adding that Lynch attends CMA meetings. "They are constantly fighting for more money for Carytown. They are huge supporters of us, which it's great to have somebody in your corner."

Moreover, Carytown residents are also content. Tracy DeVera, who's lived near Kroger for 11 years, says the street suits all of her needs. "I feel like it has a good mix — a little bit of everything," she says. "I will say that it's gotten better. They're opening lots of restaurants, salons, things for dogs and pets. [It's] quirky. They have pretty much everything we need and more."

And although you can no longer get a pork pie hat in Carytown, Richardson hasn't entirely given up on it, either. "There's still a little bit of what Carytown used to be as far as just a neighborhood resource, a neighborhood retail district. And I would love to see something happen to keep that about Carytown." ■

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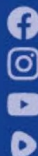


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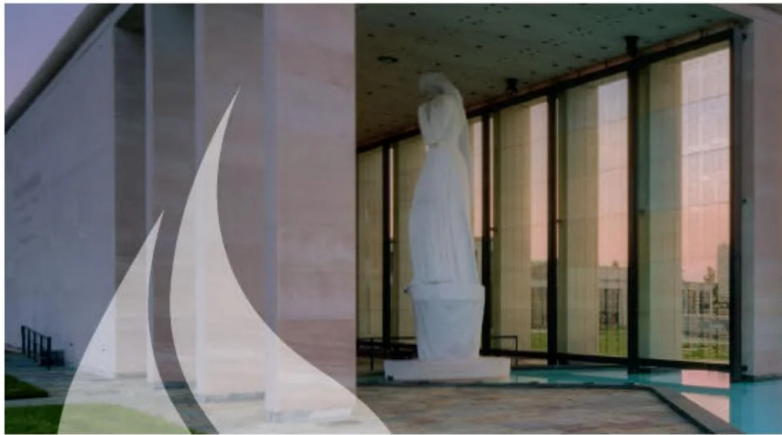
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EAT & DRINK



Espresso and chocolate chip cookies and canelés from bakery Petit Four

ASH DANIEL

RVA's bakery scene levels up
P. 110

30 years of Boychik's Deli
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Farming a bumper crop of local fruit
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Essential snacks for river days
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Observing Juneteenth with intention
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Edited by EILEEN MELLON



IN DEPTH

BAKERY BOOM

A new class of local bakers is rising to the occasion

By Eileen Mellon

Jane Dough

[instagram.com/janedough_rva](https://www.instagram.com/janedough_rva)

As Jane Lukas, the culinary force behind micro-bakery Jane Dough, stands in front of a spread of her rustic boules, baguettes, sweet and savory focaccia, and cinnamon buns, it seems the 30-year-old is exactly where she's meant to be. Lukas, however, says, "I played volleyball my whole life, and that was always the goal."

Growing up, athletics instilled in her a commitment to structure and the understanding that practice pays off. Lukas would find those same principles apply to baking. After graduating from Loyola University in Maryland, she attempted an office gig, but corporate life —

sitting still, in other words — wasn't for her. "I'm a very physical person," she says.

She decided to relocate to New York, where she attended culinary school and began managing a French bakery. When the pandemic struck, she moved back in with her parents and, like many sequestered at home, began baking. Posting weekly menus online under the alias Jane Dough, Lukas unofficially started her business.

Moving to Richmond in late 2020, she landed at Italian restaurant Lost Letter. But at the beginning of this year, Lukas says, "I hit a point where I thought I could either keep working in a

restaurant or try [making a go at Jane Dough]."

She converted her garage into a quiet production space and committed to baking full time. Lukas says her parents, both artists, set an example by following their passions. "It was so cool to grow up and to see people doing what they like to do," she says. "I love creating something with my own hands and the sense of accomplishment it brings."

Lukas' breads are on the menu at Chez Nous and sold via The Farm Bus and the Richmond Grower's Market. She also offers delivery and weekly pickups at Celladora Wines.



Jane Lukas, the "unidentified female baker" behind Jane Dough



Brown butter chocolate chip and chocolate crinkle cookies by Le Petit Morceau

Le Petit Morceau

[instagram.com/lepetitmorceaupatisserie](https://www.instagram.com/lepetitmorceaupatisserie)

When Tra My Anderson speaks about baking and Parisian pastries, there's a sense of romanticism, an adoration for the practice and art. This fall, the University of Richmond graduate, 23, plans to debut her French bakery at 1421 Bainbridge St. in Manchester.

Adopted from Vietnam at 6 months old, Anderson was raised in Farmville. Instead of going to day care, she spent time with her Luxembourg-born grandmother, Catherine. A pivotal force in Anderson's life, the matriarch was known for making escargot and quoting cookbooks.

FROM TOP: ASH DANIEL, JAY PAUL



Clockwise from left:
Pastry chef Kendra Noel
of Petit Four; jambon
beurre sandwiches,
milk bread French toast
with strawberries



Petit Four

[instagram.com/petitfour_rva](https://www.instagram.com/petitfour_rva)

Over the years, restaurateur Donnie Glass has been steadily and organically growing his family of French-inspired businesses. The story begins with Grisette restaurant in Church Hill, followed by wine bar Jardin and oyster-driven venture Beaucoup, both in the Fan.

All three share a rustic aura and serve as places where Glass' crew of longtime employees can develop professionally. Another common trait: a reliance on housemade bread.

When a space next door to Jardin became available, Glass saw an opportunity to establish an official bake shop and commissary-style kitchen to supply all the restaurants. Open since April, Petit Four is the Parisian-inspired bakery they were waiting for.

At the helm of bread and pastry production is pastry chef Kendra Noel, who joined the team

“
**They're not too precious,
just good ingredients,
good technique and
a good end product.”**

—Kendra Noel, on Petit Four's offerings

at Grisette three years ago. Noel, who says she has always had a sweet tooth, found her calling through a pastry course she took after graduating from James Madison University.

“For the first time in life, I thought, ‘Can I do this for work?’” she recalls.

She enrolled in Johnson & Wales University and began her career working in bakeries and

hotel kitchens in Denver, Seattle and Philadelphia before returning to Richmond. Described as methodical, patient and persistent, Noel has since been making breads and desserts for Grisette, Jardin and Beaucoup.

Petit Four is currently operating as a Saturday-only bake shop, with expanded hours on the horizon. Selling out of a window on Lombardy Street, Petit Four has been slingering sourdough breads and baguettes, jambon beurre sandwiches, croissants, canelés, rye cookies, and pretzel twists.

Noel says of Petit Four's offerings, “They're not too precious, just good ingredients, good technique and a good end product, very much leaning on the European and French influence of walking up to a very unassuming back door of a bakery and just getting the most amazing baguette you've ever had.”

She savored life's simple pleasures.

“My earliest memories are spending the day with her,” Anderson says. “We would pick fresh fruit and vegetables from the garden and prep them in the kitchen. I was like her sous chef. She taught me how to bake, too.”

But it was an immersive year spent with a host family in France during college that sealed her fate. Living above a bakery, Anderson says, “was just really a magical, life-changing experience; I think that's the core of what studying abroad should be. So, I decided on [French baking] as my niche, and I ran with it.”

After returning to Richmond, Anderson started vending at the South of the James Market in August

2022. The name of her business is a reference to a French novel her grandmother mentioned often: “In Search of Lost Time.” In the book, the narrator talks about the inextricable connection between food and memory, and after eating a little piece of madeleine, he is transported back to his childhood.

“[My grandmother] would tell me that the smell of cinnamon would remind her of that, like what we were doing,” Anderson says. “Little piece translates to le petit morceau.”

Using organic ingredients and sourcing flour from Sub Rosa Bakery, Le Petit Morceau will offer French pastries such as croissants, cookies, galettes and danishes, in addition to drinking chocolate, sandwiches and coffee. **R**



Tra Anderson
at the RVA
Big Market



AROUND TOWN

Rockfish
from Kuba
Kuba

BEST BITES

Dishes we can't stop dreaming about

EVERYTHING BAGEL WITH HERBY CREAM CHEESE

\$4.50 at Julio's Bagels, 14 W. Brookland Park Blvd.

Typically, my standing bagel order is a bacon, egg and cheese on an everything round, but I recently switched it up at the newly opened Julio's in North Side and delightfully stumbled upon my sando of the summer. With a slather of housemade herby cream cheese and crunchy sliced cukes, it's an uber refreshing, slightly vegetal and salty surprise that's perfect for warm weather days. —*Eileen Mellon*

REMEMBER THAT PLACE?

Boychik's Deli



Scott Elias Jr.

SCOTT ELIAS JR., co-owner of Boychik's Deli in Glen Allen, can hardly believe the restaurant is celebrating 35 years in business. He says of opening the Jewish-inspired deli, "It's just something we've always wanted to do." His late father, Boychik's founder Scott Elias Sr., was born in New York, but moved to Richmond at age 15 and had a favorite deli long before starting his own. "He would go to Boulevard Delicatessen. He ate Boulevard every day in high school."

Boychik's Deli opened in 1990, just as Innsbrook and Short Pump were starting to grow. "Broad Street was still two lanes. There was nothing out here," Elias recalls.

In the years since, Boychik's has earned a reputation for being packed with customers at all times. "For lunch, we're best known for our pastrami. We still use brisket-cut pastrami. Those are the big sellers, our grilled pastrami and Reuben."

The menu at Boychik's is large, also featuring items one might not think of as deli

staples, such as their chicken and dumplings soup. "We just had a cook one day make it, and people loved it," Elias says.

The pastrami, chicken and dumplings, and their breakfast standout — challah French toast — are prepared and served by a team that has been with Boychik's anywhere from 10 years to the full 35. Elias, who started working at the restaurant at 18, is now joined by his sisters Joanie and Jessie, brother Johnny, and stepmother and fellow co-owner Becky, a fixture at Boychik's.

"We'll try to make you feel comfortable, at home," Elias says. "People love knowing they can go to their place, have their server that remembers them, and it's a whole thing; it's comfort." —*Matthew Sporn*

Hot and new can steal the spotlight, but what about longstanding local favorites? Each month, we'll visit a Richmond-area restaurant that has been in business 15 years or longer.

ROCKFISH

\$24.95 at Kuba Kuba, 1601 Park Ave.

Hot, sweet, spicy and crispy — Kuba Kuba's rockfish will transport you to its namesake tropical island. Veteran sous chef Adam Eubank created this special turned permanent menu item. Rockfish is pan-fried with crushed plantain chips, then topped with a sauce of sambal chile paste, honey, fresh ginger, lime and cilantro and served with black beans and rice. Enjoy it outside on their patio or inside, where salsa music will keep your feet tapping. —*Jay Paul*

CORN CAKE CRUMBLE

\$12 from Lolita's, 2929 W. Cary St.

As we enter the season of corn's peak sweetness, let me put you onto a fun way to enjoy the fruit of the cob: corn cake. The confectory properties of sweet corn are popular worldwide, and I'm thankful Lolita's brings a Mexican staple to RVA. Fresh corn combines with milk and vanilla to make a sweet and savory base amplified by a hibiscus glaze and ice cream on the side. Summer can now begin. —*Kevin Johnson*



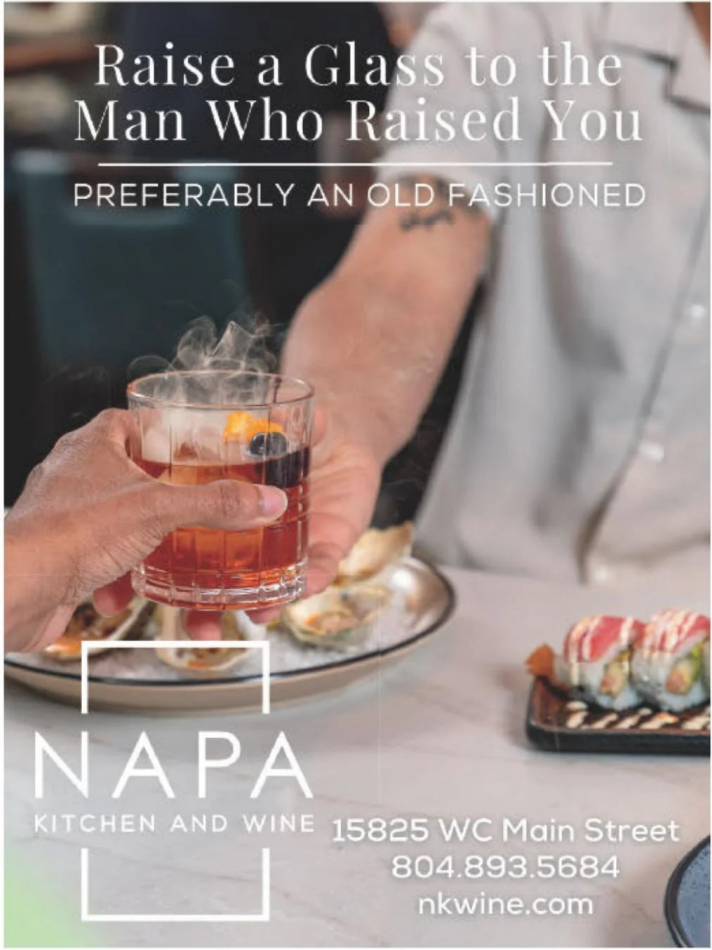
EVENT PICKS

Head to **CELESTE FARMS** for an idyllic dinner in the fields of Varina. Owned and operated by Goatocado's Ian Newell, the farm hosts a ticketed soiree every Saturday this month from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m.

Blue Bee Cider welcomes chef Liem Tran of Richmond-based at-home dining experience KASÉ Sushi for an evening of **CIDER AND SUSHI** in the tasting room on June 16. Tickets are \$60.

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SPOTLIGHT

MICHAEL SMITH

Pop a bottle with the Native Selections wine guru

By Eileen Mellon



FRIDGE ESSENTIALS

"Ravioli from Oro (I freeze it, and it makes a perfect meal on the fly) and a wedge or two of cheese from Truckle Cheesemongers."



FIRST BOTTLE

"A serving job had me navigating a wine list with 40 by-the-glass wines. I was pretty young, knew very little, but I wanted to make money. I started learning about the grapes, regions, styles, etc. The next thing I learned was that I was a big fan of wine. That was the beginning of the journey."



UNDERRATED GRAPE

"It's definitely rosé! It's the most misunderstood and gets a bad rap by many who quickly jump to conclusions based on bad examples or limited exposure. Rosé can be as serious as it can be pleasurable, and most are dry and not sickly sweet. Drink pink!"



BON VOYAGE

"Some of the wine destinations on my bucket list are Alsace, Jura, Burgundy, Champagne. I have a lot I need to explore in France."



PRESS PLAY

"When I have control of the tunes, and this depends on how much wine I've had, you'll hear anything from Roy Orbison to SZA. It must have soul, whatever the genre."



SCENE CHECK

"It feels like in Richmond there's been a true 'boom' of both places to shop for good wine, but also restaurants and cafes offering finer wine service. There are more tasting events and educational opportunities available than ever before. Wine, and especially natural wine, is becoming an integral facet of our culinary scene."

ILLUSTRATION BY ABIGAIL GIUSEPPE. CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: GETTY/CHIVACAT; COURTESY NATIONAAL ARCHIEF; GETTY/ANDRII MISCHYCHKA; GETTY/ARTMANNWITTE; GETTY/WESTLIGHT; COURTESY ORO

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13 Locations and home delivery routes all around town.





Q&A



From left: Fresh-picked strawberries at Agriberry Farm in Hanover; Pierson Geyer holds a flowering blackberry plant.

FRUITS OF LABOR

A juicy look into berry producer Agriberry Farms

By Lauren Vincelli

Pierson Geyer's parents have been farming fruit in Virginia since the mid-1980s and established their own farm in 2008. Approaching the final phase of a five-year business transition plan, Geyer is preparing to obtain full ownership of Agriberry Farm in Hanover County. Taking the reins means managing employees and migrant workers; planting, farming and harvesting fruit; then distributing hundreds of thousands of pounds of fragile fresh produce. We caught up with the VCU graduate to discuss how he navigates the fruitful operation.

Richmond magazine: How many people do you currently employ?

Pierson Geyer: During peak season, we have between 80 and 90 people on payroll, and during the downtime, it's around 12 to 16, with a blend of annual full-time and part-time [employees].

You need to be able to work out in the elements and make sure you're working quickly, because there's always plenty to do. And because it is simple, not necessarily easy, that's made it accessible to anybody from a 14-year-old in their very first job to a seasoned migrant laborer here on an H-2A visa. [There are also] retirees who are more interested in maybe doing the farmers market side and looking for supplemental income and [to] feel connected to their community.

RM: What fruits are popping off and when?

Geyer: May is all about strawberries. At the

end of May, raspberries get rolling. By the second week of June, black, purple and red raspberries, as well as blueberries, blackberries and muscadine grapes, are all on the scene. We start doing "pick-your-own" every other Saturday in June. Our CSA [community-supported agriculture program] starts up in May as well, so we're going to all the weekly farmers markets. A ripe, fresh-from-the-vine blackberry is probably my favorite fruit all the way around. Blackberries probably have one of the widest floor-to-ceiling experience spreads.

RM: Once you've bought your farm-fresh fruit, should it go in the fridge?

Geyer: Generally, your goal is preservation, and refrigeration will help that happen. But it's not necessary for you to put fruit in the fridge. All berries [are different,] but, generally, trying to get your fruit as cool and dry as possible for

preservation is best. Wait to wash until right before eating, as opposed to [washing] and then [storing], because if you wash and store, you're inviting moisture into the equation that can negatively impact longevity.

RM: What do you do with imperfect fruits?

Geyer: We have a commercial kitchen where we make essentially value-added products from the bumped and bruised fruit. Trying to mitigate waste is a big part of being sustainable. We're making jam with all our "second fruit," and we also make applesauce, apple butter, and blackberry syrup and oat bars. We offer that as a wholesale option to supply other local jam makers, as well as local breweries who are doing fruit-infused beers and things like that. We find a home for all the fruit.

RM: Can you tell us about any collaborations you have coming up?

Geyer: Hardywood Park Craft Brewery is one of our most long-standing relationships. Our businesses are almost the same age, and we've experienced growth together over the last 15 years or so. We've been a steady partner in their Virginia Roots series, which uses locally sourced ingredients, and we have supplied blackberries and raspberries for two of the beers in that line.

RM: What should we know about the CSA?

Geyer: It's a good model to support the farm and build a strong habit of fruit consumption. It's the kind of thing you can sign up for midseason, and it goes all the way until the end of October. **■**

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

RYAN RICH

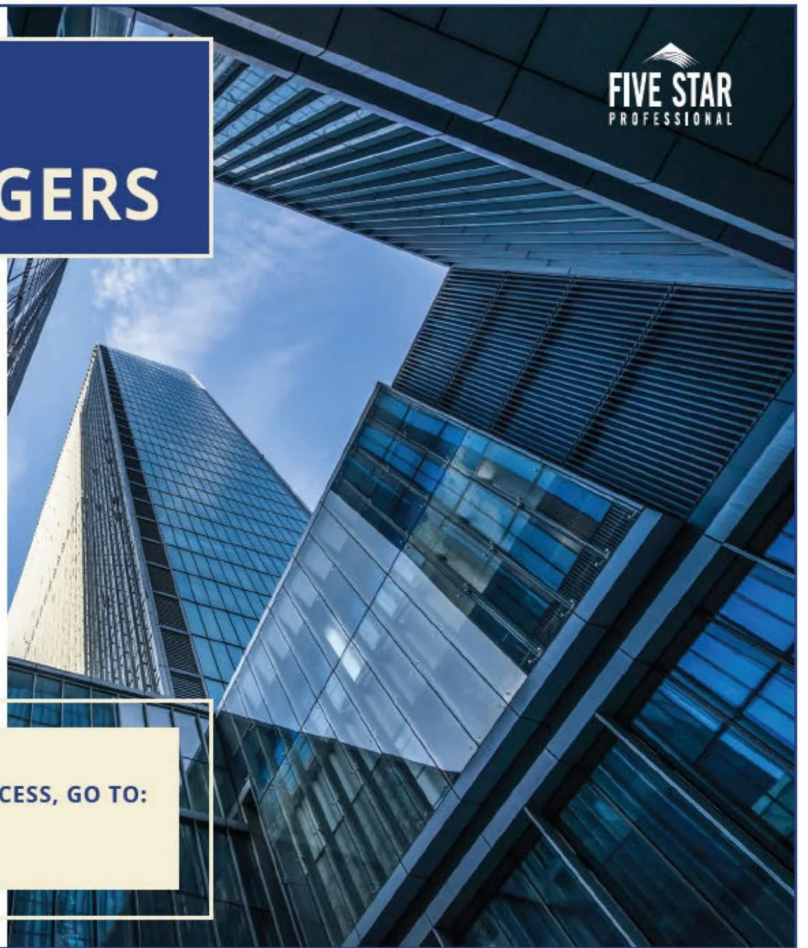
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ROUNDUP

IN THE BAG

Must-have snacks for summertime *By Eileen Mellon*

Whether you're rock-hopping at the river or hanging poolside with the crew, there's no doubt that snacks are as essential as sunscreen. Perfectly portable, easy to find and 100% local, these are our top picks for munching on the go this season.

BLACK SALT POTATO CHIPS*Keya's Snacks*

I was hooked on the Bombay Spice Potato Chips from Mumbai, India, native and Richmond resident Keya Wingfield's namesake snack biz, but her bright pink-bagged Black Salt has me in a chokehold. A flavor bomb of smoky, earthy, umami notes, consider them an amped-up alternative to salt and vinegar.

**CHICKEN SALAD***Little House Green Grocery*

Chunks of chicken are tossed in Duke's mayo, then mixed with celery, red onion, Dijon and other accents. Rice vinegar and roasted garlic lend a zip of acid and creamy sweetness. Pro tip: Use the Black Salt chips as a vessel.

**LATTE BARS***Yellow Umbrella Provisions*

If you dug chewy granola bars as a kid, say hello to the adult version. Made with minimal, organic ingredients, these espresso-tinged treats were inspired by an employee's travels to Sweden and exude just-sweet-enough energy.

**MARACUYA SELTZER***Hike Hopped Seltzer*

After abstaining from booze, Hike founder Ryan Coleman created a crispy line of seltzers that serve as a local sub-in for big-brand bubbles. Spiked with citra hops, the tropical maracuya – also known as passion fruit – is a tart summer sipper.

**OATMEAL CREAM PIE OMG OPCS**

These house-baked oatmeal cookies are filled with a fluffy schmear of cream cheese frosting, rather than marshmallow, and come in seasonal flavors including peach pie. Best part: They taste even better chilled, which is how you'll find them sold at local markets.

**HULK SMASH JUICE***The Beet Box*

Bringing on the greens, the brat-colored Hulk Smash is a refreshing addition to the beverage lineup. Cop a bottle of the cold-pressed juice with kale, pineapple, lime, cucumber and Gala apple at either the Cary Street or Church Hill locations.

**SMOKED RAINBOW TROUT FILLETS***Smoke in Chimneys*

Protein heads, this one's for you. The Virginia-based rainbow trout purveyor smokes its freshwater-raised fish and packages fillets for on-the-go eating. Enjoy straight up or load onto crackers.



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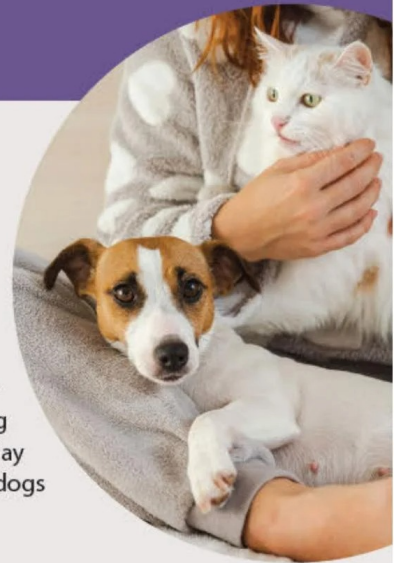
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5 FAVES

BY THE BUSHEL

Ripe summer berries make their way into local bevs and bites

By Genevelyn Steele

1 Shaved Jicama Salad \$14 at Amuse

Located inside the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Amuse not only offers views of the sculpture garden, but seasonal menus that pair with exhibits. The shaved jicama salad salutes iconic artist Frida Kahlo, whose works are on display. A crunchy, refreshing tumble of shaved jicama buoys flower buds and cheery strawberries, all placed over a chilled creamy mole sauce that serves as the dressing.

2 Berry Croissant \$5.25 at Up All Night Bakery

AgriBerry Farms is Up All Night's source for plump rotating berries you'll want to make a meal of, especially when paired with pastry cream. Over the years, Bellevue bakery owner Jonathan Highfield has tinkered with the shape of their buttery, fruit-filled croissants, landing on flaky rounds for a consistently elegant and less messy bite. Keep an eye out for other berry-infused treats including scones.

Up All Night Bakery's seasonal strawberry and blueberry croissants



3 Frozen Blackberry Margarita \$11 at Conejo

This fresh and fruity frozen margarita is more than a buzzy pleasure; it's a dopamine/serotonin blast of 100% agave tequila lashed with the mood-elevating flavonols and ellagitannins found in blackberries. Tart and jammy, this soothing refresher also comes with a coconut swirl for the ultimate getaway in a glass.

4 Blue Basil Farm Blueberry Cake \$8 at West End Farmers Market

Superlative ingredients make this confection a smart choice. Layers of cake and frosting handily toggle between airy and dense, with the baker favoring Italian meringue for the icing, which coaxes tastebuds on an oozy blueberry-lemon journey. The dessert is also made with all organic ingredients, including eggs from Blue Basil Farm's heirloom chickens.

5 Strawberry Cinnamon Roll \$6 at C&P Baking Company

A value-added addition to Shockoe Bottom, C&P Baking Company opened in March, offering French- and Southern-adjacent treats alongside Haitian takeout and breakfast. Once berries began fruiting, pâtissier Sherwin Piley stocks her cases with berry-laden danish and strawberry cinnamon rolls, a seasonal upgrade to the gooey breakfast treat. Wash them down with a glass of housemade strawberry milk or strawberry oat milk, both laced with crushed fresh fruit.



PURVEYOR

Mitchell's Gut

HISTORY: Mitchell's Gut is a new, vinegar-based project developed by Richmond-based Ninja Kombucha. The Brookland Park Boulevard kombucha brewery founded by owner Brett Nobile has been experimenting with drinking vinegars since 2017. His first product, Bertha's Country Lane Harvest Apple Cider Vinegar, was launched in January, with new flavors to come.

SPECIALTY: Mitchell's Gut is named after a section of rapids in the James River and takes advantage of another Virginia specialty: apples. While it can be difficult to source local ingredients for kombucha, Nobile explains that working with vinegar allows the company to partner with area farms. People have long been aware of apple cider vinegar as a remedy, making it a "perfect first thing to do," he says. "[Also,] because apples in Virginia are awesome."



Bertha Burke, Brett Nobile's late neighbor and "substitute grandma," for whom his first vinegar is named

PRODUCTION: Fresh apple cider, pressed in the fall, arrives at Mitchell's Gut from an orchard in Virginia and is then openly fermented with kombucha culture at Ninja Kombucha for anywhere from 40 days to months at a time. It's bottled at its facility in North Side.

BUY: Find the vinegars at Ninja Kombucha, Soul N' Vinegar, Boketto Wellness and at ninja-kombucha.com. —Melody Yuan



Frozen
Negroni at
Laura Lee's

OPEN TAB

The Cool Down

Frozen cocktails have a time and a place — it's right now

Not to be dramatic, but as beverages go, frozen can be full-body revelations. A bit of history about whipping up icy slush with booze: The strong and unregulated liquor illicitly produced during Prohibition in the 1920s needed toning down, and ice helped. People stuffed glasses with chunks or chips of ice for the first time, and then in the '30s, the blender was born. Enter frozen cocktails, which became all the rage. Today, frozen cocktails can get some flack, but done right — with fresh ingredients and the right balance of sweetness — they are a profound summer pleasure.

Frosérita at Beauvine Burger Concept First, a shout-out to En Su Boca, because the frozen margarita base for this drink — with housemade sour mix and Triple Sec — is an ESB recipe. The Beauvine crew take it to a new level by swirling it with their well-crafted frosé. The result is a floral, tangy dance of elderflower and rosé with a strong citrus partner.

Missionary's Downfall at The Emerald Lounge

Rum, honey! Real honey provides the heady sweetness in this drink. Pineapple, peach and lemon are laced with mint and churned into a crushable cooler guaranteed to elicit the "ahhh" response. Emerald crafts some of the best — and strongest — frozen refreshers in the city.

Frozen Negroni at Laura Lee's

Everyone's favorite reliable in frozen form. This classic beauty stars gin, Campari, sweet vermouth, lime and fresh grapefruit. The slushiness moves your palate through its bittersweet layers in a different way than the on-the-rocks version. Doubled-up citrus is a nice touch, too. —*Bird Cox*

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INSIGHT

IMPARTING STORIES

Juneteenth gives a Richmond chef a moment to reflect and celebrate *By Eileen Mellon*

Leah Branch didn't learn about shoebox lunches until just a few years ago. But as a Black woman and an executive chef leading a modern revival of Southern food at The Roosevelt in Church Hill, she felt an innate connection to the story of both sustenance and survival.

Shoebox lunches were adopted out of necessity, a resourceful way for Black people to ensure that they could eat when traveling during the Jim Crow era. Instead of risking denial of service at restaurants while on the road, Black people packed meals in shoeboxes as a safe way to disguise the contents and ensure their families were fed. The lunches became a symbol of determination and defiance.

For Juneteenth (June 19), Branch and The Roosevelt are harkening back to a time of resilience by presenting 250 pay-what-you-can shoebox lunches starting

at \$5. The lunches are also a response to current events — all proceeds will go to supporting local museums, particularly the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia.

"We are going to make a really Juneteenth-focused lunch," Branch says. "The base price is \$5. You can have a super affordable meal and contribute a little bit, or you can boost it up, if you like, and just support."

The contents of the lunchboxes: a housemade hibiscus drink in a juice box, black-eyed pea salad, potato salad, compressed watermelon, and red velvet trifle, along with a choice of sandwich (pulled pork, crispy chicken or fried mushrooms). All of the base items will be vegan and gluten free. A history page about Juneteenth and a bookmark will be included

in each lunchbox. They will be available for preorder, with pickup times between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

"We definitely want to focus on some things that you would see on Juneteenth because people are celebrating that week, and then also, what's nourishing for someone that they can take with them," she says. "We want to just make them feel really cared about; I think that's probably a thing that we think about a lot."

Juneteenth, also known as Jubilee Day, marks the day in 1865 when U.S. soldiers delivered the news in Texas that slavery had been abolished nearly 2 1/2 years earlier via the Emancipation Proclamation. Although slavery has been illegal in America for over 150 years, its legacy of systemic racism and other societal obstacles continues to have an impact on the Black community, including in the restaurant industry. In recent months, the Trump administration has eliminated diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives from universities and other federally



Leah Branch,
executive chef of
The Roosevelt



The Roosevelt will offer pay-what-you-can shoebox lunches for Juneteenth.

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funded entities and discontinued grants and research funding.

Branch says, "With everything that's going on right now, we really wanted to use the opportunity to see if we could support some museums, because I feel like they really are a place where we can focus some of our care right now. We're hoping that we can build up some energy for that and make a strong donation."

In addition, on June 20 and 21, The Roosevelt will host a multicourse June-teenth dinner with a prix fixe menu including an amuse bouche, small plate, entree and dessert for \$50.

A Chesterfield native, Branch has been observing Juneteenth and the heritage it represents through her role as a chef. In 2023, local food historian Deb Freeman joined Branch for a night of storytelling and shared plates, and last year, Branch honored Leni Sorensen, a chef who



Sommelier Justin Ferguson will prepare wine pairings for a Juneteenth dinner hosted by Secret Supper Society on June 22.

restaurant for the past five years and one of the few Black sommeliers (they represent just 12% of the total) in the country.

On June 22, Branch will also partner with the pop-up Secret Supper Society. She says her dishes will be inspired by sugarcane, an ingredient she has been exploring for the past year and a crop with a complex history that's intertwined with Black communities. Branch will collaborate with Richmond-based wine connoisseur Justin Ferguson, a Level 3 certified sommelier who has garnered a wide following on Instagram (@TheBlackSommRVA).

Branch says of tapping into the past, "I'm just a little Black nerd that's grateful to have an excuse to study these things and [consider] what to do with that information that's interactive. I think that's why food is such a great medium to discover some history." **A**

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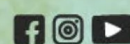
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6.26 – FLOWERS AFTER 5, 5-8PM, *LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN*

6.28 – PRIDE NIGHT AT TOP GOLF, 6:30PM, *TOP GOLF*

6.30 – LOVE ON TAP, 12PM, *HARDYWOOD PARK*

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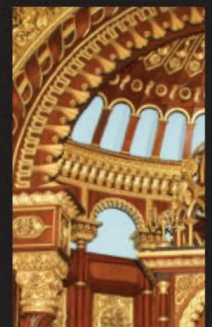
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PARTING SHOT



Emerson, a Northstar student, sinks a basket to cap off the April 25 ribbon-cutting ceremony for the school's new gymnasium and community center.

NORTHSTAR ACADEMY & CAREER CENTER now has what its head of school, Crystal Trent, calls "a powerful symbol of what we believe our students deserve": a nearly 16,000-square-foot gymnasium and community center. The building, made possible thanks to a \$12 million fundraising effort, features "spaces that inspire, include and empower" and an integrated hearing loop, which Northstar says is the first of its kind at a K-12 school in Virginia.

The nonprofit, which marks three decades next year, annually serves about 125 students up to 24 years old who have disabilities and face academic, physical or social challenges. In 2022, it moved from its "train car campus" — as Dr. Richard Bennett, chair of the school's board of directors, calls it — on Shradler Road in Henrico County to the former site of Strayer University near Wyndham, about 5 miles away. This allowed Northstar to build a single, unified campus for its K-12 and career center students.

An April 25 ribbon-cutting was attended by students, board members, supporters, Navi the gator mascot and government leaders such as Supervisor Mindy Roundtree, Del. David Owen and U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman. The new facility, the congressman says, "puts Henrico out there as a leader and saying, 'Hey, we're going to make the investment in resources and in time and effort to make sure that these great folks in our community have even more opportunities.'"

While the school is already working on its next project — a track and field facility to be completed this summer — the new gym today offers Northstar students a place for sports, clubs, prom and other activities, marketing manager Maggie Latimer says. "[It's] really special for our kids to be able to get that traditional school experience feeling while also having all of the things that make Northstar a special and accommodating place." —**Mark Newton**



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